ONLY A FARM BOY

FRANK V. WEBSTER

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"I'LL GET HIM NOW!" CRIED DAN.—*Page* 29.

Only a Farm Boy

Or

Dan Hardy's Rise in Life

BY

FRANK V. WEBSTER

AUTHOR OF "THE NEWSBOY PARTNERS," "BOB THE CASTAWAY," "THE BOY FROM THE RANCH," "THE YOUNG TREASURE HUNTER," ETC.

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By FRANK V. WEBSTER

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ONLY A FARM BOY

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ONLY A FARM BOY

CHAPTER I

AN ANGRY FARMER

"HEY there, Dan Hardy, what ye doin' now?"

"I'm oiling the corn sheller, Mr. Savage. It needed it."

"Huh! Guess ye wanted t' take a rest, an' that was your excuse fer it. Git t' work now, an' don't let me see you loafin' agin. What do ye s'pose I keep ye fer, anyhow?"

"I'm trying to do the best I can," replied Dan, speaking respectfully but firmly to the miserly old farmer for whom he worked for his board and clothes.

"Th' best ye can, eh? Wa'll, some folks' best ain't very good, t' my way of thinkin'. Here ye've been most all th' mornin' shellin' a few bushels of corn, an' there's lots of other chores t' be done. Ye've go' t' git a hustle on ye, ef ye stay 'round here, an' th' sooner ye git that notion inter

yer head th' better it'll be fer ye," and the mean farmer shook his fist in the boy's face.

"I know I have to work for you, Mr. Savage," answered Dan, as he again began to turn the heavy wheel of the corn sheller, and feed the yellow ears into the chute. "I did not stop to rest, as you suppose, but the sheller needed oiling. It was not working right."

"Guess ye thought it'd be a leetle easier if ye put some grease on it, that's what ye mean. An' I don't want ye wastin' my oil, nuther. Oil costs money, I'd have ye know, and money is mighty skurse these days."

"I guess it is, as far as I'm concerned," murmured Dan to himself, as he bent his back to his work. "I haven't seen any money of my own in so long that I don't believe I'd recognize it if a quarter of a dollar spoke to me," and he smiled a bit, in spite of the mean words of his employer.

"Now mind what I told ye," went on the farmer, as he started to leave the barn. "Don't let me catch ye loafin' any more, or ye won't git off so easy."

"What do you mean, Mr. Savage?"

"Never mind what I mean. Don't you talk back to me! Keep on turnin' that sheller."

Dan had stopped a moment in his work, while he asked the question, and this seemed to further anger Mr. Savage.

"Now mind," concluded the man, as he left the barn, "Lively's the word on this farm, an' ef I catch any of my hired men loafin' I'll take it outer their wages, that's what I'll do."

"He'd have hard work taking it out of mine," thought Dan, as his employer left him. "He'll have to cut off the tails of some of the old coats he gives me, or shorten my trousers, or wear down the old shoes so the soles are a little thinner. That's all the wages I get, except what I eat, and goodness knows, if he begins to cut down on that, I'll be in a bad way."

Mr. Savage, while one of the wealthiest farmers in that locality, was considered by his neighbors as a miserly sort of a man, and they were not far from it. He owned over a hundred acres of good farm and grazing land, with some timber, a large house and substantial barns. His main farm was about two miles from the village, though he owned pastures and lots here and there throughout the township. Some of this land he had come into possession of by foreclosing mortgages in a most peremptory manner.

Dan continued to work the corn sheller, a machine built to take the kernels of corn from the cob. He turned a big wheel with one hand, and fed the ears into the chute with the other. From a spout the yellow grains fell into a bushel basket, while the cobs were tossed out on the other side into a heap.

"I wonder what he meant, when he said I wouldn't get off so easy," reflected Dan. "Could he mean that he'll whip me? I don't believe I'd stand that. I think I'd run away, though where I could go, with no money, and only a few ragged clothes, is more than I know. Oh, dear, I wish mother was alive," and in spite of himself tears came into Dan's eyes, for his mother had only been dead about a year.

Mrs. Hardy had been a widow, and, with her only son Dan, had lived just outside the village of Hayden, in one of our Eastern states. Her husband had left her a little money but she had had to spend most of it for doctor's bills, as her health was very poor. Dan could not earn much in the village, and they had had barely enough to live on. When Mrs. Hardy died it took what little money was left for the funeral, and Dan found himself without a dollar in the world, and no friend or

relative to aid him. The place he had in the general store of Hank Lee, where he earned a mere pittance, had been filled by another boy when Dan had to stay home to take care of his mother in her final illness.

It looked as if he would have to go to the poorhouse, but, almost at the last moment, Peter Savage had agreed to take the lad and give him board and clothes in exchange for work. To this Dan had agreed, but he had no idea how hard he would have to toil.

He was continually kept busy doing "chores" about the farm from early dawn until dark, and, even then he was not through, for Susan Savage, Peter's wife, used to make Dan help with the housework,—drying the dishes, blackening the stove, and even doing the sweeping. She found out Dan could do these things, as he had often helped his mother.

"He's almost as good as a hired girl," Susan confided to her husband, "and it's cheaper to have him than it is a girl."

"Then make him work, Susan," said Peter. "Work is good fer boys. None of 'em gits half enough."

And so poor Dan worked until nearly every

night he was so tired he could hardly sleep.

Dan had an ambition to be something more than a mere farm hand. He was better educated than most boys in his circumstances, for his father had been a school teacher in a neighboring village, until failing health had caused him to resign his position.

Mr. Hardy had instructed his son in several branches, and the boy had a real love for learning, though his opportunities were small.

Among his choicest possessions, and, in fact, one of his very few left after the debts were paid for his mother's funeral, was a small case of books of instruction.

When Dan went to work for Mr. Savage, the boy thought he would have a chance to study, but the miserly farmer was afraid Dan would waste time over the volumes, and would not consent to allow him any hour of leisure in which to advance his lessons. Dan was thus forced to pore over the books at night, and he had to be careful even in this, as, had Mr. Savage or his wife caught him at it, they would have scolded him for burning kerosene oil.

Still Dan determined to educate himself, but it was hard work. The other boys in the village

used to laugh at him for trying to use correct language, but Dan did not mind that. He hoped, some day, to take a higher position in life than that of "hired man" and he wanted to be ready for it when the opportunity came. So he took good care of his little case of books, though Mr. Savage sneered at him, and often threatened to throw them out if he caught Dan "wasting" his time over them.

"I should like to run away from him," thought the boy, as he kept on with the tiresome labor of shelling the corn, "only I'm afraid he'd make me come back. I suppose he has some sort of a claim on me until I'm of age, and that won't be for five years. Well, there's no use kicking. I've got to stand it."

Dan was a well built, strong lad, and he was healthy, which counts for a good deal. Consequently his gloomy thoughts did not bother him long. Still he did wish he could have it a little easier in life. He would have liked to go fishing once in a while, or take a long tramp through the woods. But the only time he did not have to work all day long was Sunday, and then his employer, who was very strict as regards church, would not hear of any one taking innocent pleasures on that day.

As Dan continued to turn the corn sheller, a shadow fell across the broad patch of sunlight that streamed in the open barn door. It was the shadow of a man, and Dan glanced up, expecting to see the angry face of Mr. Savage. Instead he beheld a stranger.

"Good morning, my lad," spoke the man, in a rather pleasant voice. "I see you are hard at work."

"Yes, I've got to get all this corn shelled to-day."

"Are you acquainted in these parts?" inquired the man, as he took a seat on an upturned peck measure.

"Yes, sir. I've lived here all my life."

"Then I guess you could tell me how far it is to the village."

"Yes, sir; it's about two miles by the main road."

"Do you know all the people in the village?" and the man looked sharply at Dan, who had stopped his turning of the heavy wheel to answer the questions.

"Well, hardly all of them; I know the names of most of them."

"And where they live too, I suppose?"

"I guess I could find almost any house."

Dan was wondering why the man was asking so many questions, and had about made up his mind that the stranger was a book agent, for occasionally such men visited the farm, though they usually went to the house instead of the barn.

"Who keeps the general store in the village—let's see, it's called Strawdon, isn't it?"

"No, sir, but that's pretty near it. The name of the town is Hayden."

"Oh, yes, Hayden. I remember now."

"Well," replied Dan, "it's not very large. There are probably five hundred persons in it. It contains a bank, several stores, a grist mill, and just outside of it is a box factory. Then there is a town hall, where the selectmen meet once a month, and a small library, but I don't get much chance to go there."

"Why not?"

"Well, Mr. Savage doesn't approve of books."

"Do you like them?"

"I am fond of reading and study, but I don't get much opportunity."

"That's too bad. Who did you say kept the general store in the village?"

"I didn't say," replied Dan with a smile, "but Hank Lee keeps it."

"Do you know him?"

"I used to work for him."

"He has a brother; hasn't he?"

"I believe he has, but I never saw him. He does not live in this part of the country."

"What's his name; do you know?"

"Simon, I believe. I am not sure, but I think I have heard Mr. Lee refer to him by that name. He seldom spoke of him."

"Do you know why?"

"No, sir," and Dan must have shown some surprise at the number of questions the man was asking, for the latter added:

"Please don't think I am too inquisitive. I'm a stranger around here, and I'm looking for some friends. I thought the storekeeper would be the best man to inform me, and I should like to know a little about him, before I call on him."

"I can't tell you very much about him," replied Dan, "as, even though I worked for him for a time, he never told me much about himself or his brother."

"Oh, I don't care about his brother," said the stranger quickly. "I only asked out of curiosity. I suppose there is a doctor in the village?"

"Yes, sir, Dr. Maxwell."

"Where is his house?"

"It's a big red one, just off the road that goes to Flagtown."

"Are there any houses near it?"

"No, the nearest one is about an eighth of a mile away."

"Well, you seem to know this locality pretty well. I wonder—"

What the stranger was about to remark he did not state, as, at that moment another shadow moved across the sunlit patch, and the man jumped up quickly, looking nervously about him. It was Mr. Savage who suddenly appeared, and, for a moment he did not notice the stranger.

"Wa'all, ye good-fer-nothin' lazy boy, loafin' ag'in, are ye!" exclaimed Mr. Savage in an angry voice. " I caught ye at it! That's what I git fer savin' ye from th' poorhouse! I'll teach ye t' waste my valuable time! I'll—"

"Mr. Savage, I only stopped for a few moments to answer some questions this gentleman was asking me," said Dan boldly, motioning to the well-dressed stranger. "I could not talk and shell corn at the same time, for he could not hear what I said. I'm sorry—"

"It's all my fault," broke in the stranger. "I

was making some inquiries of the lad, and I regret if he has incurred your displeasure. I'm sure I'll willingly pay for his time, as the information he gave was worth it," and the man took out a well-filled wallet. At the sight of the money it contained, and at the mention of the word "pay" a change came over the face of Mr. Savage.

CHAPTER II

THE DANGEROUS BULL

"WHY, of course," began Mr. Savage, while he scraped some mud off his boots with a stick, "ye know this corn has all got t' be shelled t' day, an' when Dan stops, th' work ain't goin' on. Work is money, an' when he don't work I lose jest so much money."

"I understand," replied the stranger quickly. "I am a business man myself, and I'm willing to pay for whatever time I kept this young man from his work. I guess we can figure it out. We'll say I took up about ten minutes of his time. That's one sixth of an hour. Now how much do you pay him by the hour?"

"I don't pay him by the hour," replied Mr. Savage, a little confused.

"Well, by the day, then."

"I don't pay him by th' day, nuther."

"Oh, I see. You hire him by the week."

"No, sir, not exactly. Dan, git on with that shellin'. There ain't no call fer ye t' stand loafin' now. Me an' this gentleman kin settle our business between ourselves."

The truth was he did not want Dan to hear what was said, as Mr. Savage was just a little bit ashamed of himself. Dan began feeding the yellow ears into the chute, but the noise of the sheller did not prevent him hearing what was said further.

"Then if you'll tell me what his week's wages are, I think I can figure out what I owe you," and the stranger took out pencil and paper.

"Wa'al, he don't exactly work by the week nuther."

"That's so, I'd forgotten. Farm hands generally work for so much a month and their board. What are his monthly wages?"

"Look a-here!" exclaimed Mr. Savage. "That's my affair. What right ye got t' come around here, askin' me my business?"

"No right," replied the stranger coolly, "only I wanted to make up for the time I kept this boy from his work."

"Wa'al, I guess ef ye give me a quarter we'll call it square."

"I'm satisfied if you are," replied the stranger, passing over the money. "Twenty-five cents for ten minutes, is at the rate of a dollar and a half an hour. In ten hours, which, I believe, is the farm day, he earns fifteen dollars. That's very good wages for a boy like him."

"Look a-here!" blustered Mr. Savage. "I don't pay him no fifteen dollars a day, an' ye know it. No farm hand gits that much; I don't myself. But if ye come around here, stickin' yer nose in my business, ye got t' pay fer it, that's all. Now ye'd better git away from here fer I might charge ye rent," and he grinned in a malicious manner.

"Thank you, I'm just about to leave," said the man, as he walked out of the barn.

"Wa'al, ye'd better."

The stranger smiled as he walked away, and Dan, watching him, saw him take a little red book out of his pocket, and write something in it.

"Do ye know that man?" asked Mr. Savage, turning to Dan, when the stranger was out of sight down the road, which ran in front of the barn.

"No, sir. He came in here and began asking me questions."

"What kind?"

"About the people and houses in the village."

"Humph! Some pesky book agent, I'll bet half a cooky."

"I don't know what he was," replied Dan. "He said he was looking for a friend, and he wanted to know about Mr. Lee's brother, Simon."

"That good-for-nothing? Wa'al, ef he's a friend of Simon Lee, I ain't got no use fer him. Now you git on with yer work, an' don't stand talkin' here all day. Ye've got t' shell that corn before night, or ye'll have t' do it after ye help Mrs. Savage with th' house work."

Dan again bent his back to the task, turning the big wheel faster to make up for the time he had lost through no fault of his own. Mr. Savage pocketed the quarter the man had given him, first biting it to see that it was not a lead one.

"When ye git done here I want ye t' go down t' th' south pasture, an' let th' old black bull out, an' inter the upper lot," he called to Dan, raising his voice to be heard above the noise of the corn sheller. "Ye'll have t' be mighty spry, too, fer he's as ugly as sin, an' he'll break out of the pasture ef he git's a chance."

" I'll be careful," promised Dan.

As the boy went on with his work, after his employer had left him, he could not help thinking of the rather mysterious stranger, who had asked so many questions.

"I wonder what he wanted?" he said to himself. "Perhaps he was a new doctor, looking for a place to establish a practice. But I don't believe Hayden is big enough for two doctors. Maybe, as Mr. Savage says, he's a book agent. He seemed to have plenty of money. He figured out I get fifteen dollars a day. Land! if I got fifteen cents for myself I'd be lucky," and Dan sighed.

It was afternoon before he had finished shelling the corn, and he was quite tired. Yet he rather welcomed the long walk to the south pasture to let the bull into the upper lot. The animal was a large one, and was well known about the countryside as a savage creature, somewhat like his owner.

"I hope he doesn't get out," thought Dan, as he neared the pasture. "I guess the best way would be to go in quietly, so he doesn't catch sight of me, let down the bars leading into the upper lot, and then show myself. The bull will begin to run around as he always does, then he'll notice that

the bars are down, and he'll go just where I want him to."

Dan saw the bull quietly feeding off in one corner of the pasture. The boy managed to get in without attracting the animal's attention, and let down the bars leading into the south lot, where the grass was better, for that was the reason Mr. Savage wanted the animal shifted from one spot to the other.

All would have gone well, but for the fact, of which Dan was not aware, that there was a weak place in the fence enclosing the upper lot, where the bull was expected to go. When the bars were down Dan shouted to attract the animal's attention, and then he took a safe position outside the fence.

The black bull came forward on the run, thinking some fool-hardy person had dared to dispute his rights. The animal caught sight of the lowered bars, and, a moment later had done just as Dan expected, run into the upper lot.

Then something else happened. The bull, who was up to all such tricks, saw a weak spot in the fence. At it he went, full tilt, and, a moment later was off down the road bellowing and kicking up a cloud of dust.

"The bull has escaped!" cried Dan. "Oh, what shall I do? He may kill somebody before he's caught! Mr. Savage will blame me!" and he started down the highway in pursuit of the ugly animal.

CHAPTER III

UP A TREE

THE upper lot and south pasture belonging to Mr. Savage were some distance away from the farm, and on a road that was not much used. However, this road connected with the main highway, near the village, and Dan's fear was that the bull would run into town, creating no end of damage.

"I wonder if I can catch him?" the boy thought. "He's a swift animal. Oh, dear! I hope he doesn't meet any girl or woman with a red dress, or there'll be a terrible time. I wonder why bulls hate red so? But I guess I'd better stop wondering about that, and begin to think how I can stop him, if I do catch him."

Dan remembered that the bull had a ring in his nose, and to the ring was attached a stout cord, the other end being looped to a buckle in a sort of halter on the animal's head.

"If I had some sort of a hook I could catch it

in the rope or ring, and hold the bull back," he thought. "It would have to be a pretty long hook, for I wouldn't dare go very close to the savage animal. I have it! I'll cut a long pole, with a prong on one end, and I can hook that in the cord, perhaps."

Dan saw a tree that might provide what he wanted, and he lost little time in cutting a long pole. He trimmed off all the branches but one near the end, and this left him a very good substitute for a hook. The trimming he did as he ran along.

The bull was now out of sight, around a turn in the road, but there was a cloud of dust by which Dan could trace the animal's movement.

In a little while Dan, still running as fast as he could, met a man driving a horse, attached to a light carriage. The horse seemed frightened, and the man was pale.

"Was that your bull that just ran up the road?" the man asked.

"No, sir; it belongs to Mr. Savage."

"It does, eh? Where is he?"

"At the farm. The bull got out of the lot."

"I guess you mean that you let it out! That's the way with careless boys. I want to tell you

that the beast frightened my horse, and it nearly ran away. Part of the harness was broken, and I expect Mr. Savage to pay for it. You can tell him that I say so. My name's Sam Battle and I'm always ready for a fight, too. You can tell him that."

"Was the bull going fast?" asked Dan, more anxious to catch up to the animal, than to hear about the man's characteristics.

"Fast? Well, you'd ought to have seen him. He'll do a lot of damage, before he gets off the rampage, and Mr. Savage will have a heavy bill to settle. You'd better hurry up, if you want to catch him, and don't forget I've got to have pay for the broken harness."

"I suppose Mr. Savage will threaten to get that out of me in some way," thought Dan, as he hurried on, almost out of breath.

As he went around a turn in the road he saw an elderly woman stooping over a basket that had contained eggs. It was easy to see what had been in the basket, for, all about her, was a pool of whites and yellows from the broken shells. She was trying to pick out a few whole ones, and, in the process her hands had become all daubed up with the sticky substance.

"Hi, boy!" she called to Dan. "Come and help me gather up these eggs."

"I can't," said Dan, respectfully. "I've got to catch the bull."

"Was that your bull?"

"It belongs to the man I work for."

"Oh, I know you now. You're Dan Hardy, and you live out to Mr. Savage's farm. Well, he'll have a nice bill from me, I can tell you. There was fourteen dozen eggs in that basket, and I was takin' 'em to Hank Lee's store to trade fer groceries. Now I don't believe there's half a dozen eggs left. He'll have to pay fer 'em, that's what he'll have t' do!"

"Did the bull run into you, Mrs. Dowden?" asked Dan anxiously, as he recognized the old lady.

"No, Dan, he didn't exactly run into me, but when I saw the savage critter comin' I just sot my basket of eggs down in the middle of the road, an' I ran under a fence until he got by."

"Then how did the eggs get broken?"

"Why, that savage black critter jest stomped up and down on that basket of eggs until they are what you see now—nothin' but a mess of whites an' yallers. That bull jest did it out of spite,

'cause I s'pose he couldn't eat 'em. Then he gives a bellow, stuck his tail up in the air, and run on. Oh, he'll do a lot of damage 'fore he gits through."

"I'm sorry," began Dan.

"I don't s'pose it's your fault," said Mrs. Dowden, as she managed to rescue one whole egg from the mess. "But I'll have the law on Peter Savage, if he don't pay me fer these eggs, an' they're wuth thirty cents a dozen now at store prices, too. Land sakes! I never see a bull stomp on eggs afore, an' I don't want to see it ag'in."

But Dan did not stay to hear what the elderly lady had to say. He left her standing in the middle of a little lake of whites and yellows, and continued on his way after the bull.

As Dan was hurrying along a straight stretch of road, with the bull some distance ahead of him, he saw a man walking just in advance of the animal. The man had come across lots and emerged upon the highway without seeing the bull.

"I hope old Pullox (which was the bull's name) doesn't attack that man," thought Dan. "Perhaps he'll run right by."

But this, evidently, was not what the bull was going to do. Dan could hear the animal give a bellow of rage, then it halted, pounded the ground

with its fore feet, and prepared to charge on the man.

"Look out!" cried Dan, giving a shout of warning.

But there was no need of it, for the man had heard the noise made by the bull. He turned around quickly and saw the angry animal about to attack him.

"Run!" shouted Dan.

The man did so, and not a moment too soon. The bull was after him like a flash, and Dan, using his little remaining wind, redoubled his pace, hoping to be able to aid the man.

On and on went the bull in pursuit. There were two clouds of dust now; a small one, raised by the fleeing man, and a larger one, kicked up by the bull.

"He may kill him!" thought Dan. "Isn't this the worst luck!"

The man gave a look behind him. The bull was nearer. Then he did the only thing feasible under the circumstances. He climbed a tree, scrambling up it with a speed that did not seem possible in such a stout person, for he was quite fat.

"Stay there! Stay there!" cried Dan, as he ran up.

"That's just what I intend to do, young fellow," the man answered, panting from his exertions.

"What do you s'pose—Why, if it isn't Dan Hardy!"

"Oh, Mr. Lee!" exclaimed Dan, recognizing the crusty storekeeper for whom he had once worked. "I didn't know you at first."

"No, and no one else would either, the way I had to run to escape being killed by that ugly critter. You let him loose on purpose, that's what you did."

"On purpose, Mr. Lee?"

"Yes, that's what you done. I know you! You wanted to pay me back for not taking you into my store again, and you thought you'd get even. I'll have the law on you for this!"

The bull was now pawing around the foot of the tree, paying no attention to Dan, but, seemingly, very anxious to get at the storekeeper.

"You have no right to talk that way, Mr. Lee," spoke Dan firmly. "You know I had nothing to do with the bull chasing you. I couldn't help it."

"Didn't you let the bull loose?"

"No, sir. He broke out of the upper lot, when I was changing him from the south pasture. There was a weak place in the fence."

"Well, you knowed it was there, and you done it on purpose, and I'm goin' to have the law on you for it. I've got a weak heart, and I may die from being chased this way. I feel bad now. I'll make you pay the doctor bills and the funeral expenses, too, that's what I will."

"I'm sorry, and I hope you'll not be sick," responded the lad. "But if you are, I haven't a cent to pay any bills with."

The bull was running around the tree in a circle, pawing the ground and bellowing.

"Why don't you take the ugly critter away?" demanded Mr. Lee, holding tightly to a branch, for he was afraid of falling out of the tree.

"I want to, but I can't get a chance to hook this pole into the ring. If I could he'd come along peaceably enough."

"You're keeping me up here for spite!" declared the man. "You picked out this lonely spot, where there's no houses, on purpose."

Dan did not take the trouble to answer the unreasonable man. He was watching his chance to catch the prong into the cord or ring in the bull's nose. But the creature, while it showed no disposition to attack Dan, was keeping out of the boy's reach.

"Aren't you going to take the critter away?" demanded the man again. "I've got important business at my store, and if I'm delayed I'll charge you damages, and heavy ones too."

"I guess the way you'd figure it out, I now owe you more than I can ever pay," replied Dan more coolly, as he saw the bull was evidently not likely to run any farther. "I'll get him away if I can. I'll have to get you to help me. If you'll stick one foot out, on the other side of the tree, and make believe you're coming down, you may attract his attention there, and I can sneak behind him and slip the stick into the ring. Just put your foot down a ways."

"I know you! You want the bull to injure me!" cried Mr. Lee. "I see your trick! You want me to get hurt so I can't sue you. But I'll sue just the same."

"Look here!" exclaimed Dan, in desperation. "If you want to get down out of that tree, and if you want me to take the bull away, you've got to help me. If you don't do as I say I'll have to leave the bull here until I can go and get help."

"Don't do that! Don't do that!" begged Mr. Lee in terror. "Don't leave me alone with that savage critter. I'll do whatever you say. What is it,

Dan? I always liked you. You're a good boy. I—I wish I'd given you back your place in the store, but I couldn't do it. I had to have somebody. You're a good boy, Dan. You won't hold a grudge against an old man like me. Don't go off, and leave me all alone. I'll do as you say. Which foot shall I stick down?"

"It doesn't make much difference," replied Dan, hardly able to keep back a smile at the change of manner in the man. "Either one will do. I want you to attract the bull's attention, until I can sneak up behind him."

"All right, Dan. I'll do it. But don't go off and leave me alone," and the storekeeper prepared to lower his foot. At the first sign of movement on the part of the man up the tree the bull ceased going about in a circle and stood still.

"I'll get him now!" cried Dan.

CHAPTER IV

THE STRANGER AGAIN

WHILE the maddened animal had its attention fixed on Mr. Lee it did not observe what Dan was doing. The boy went quietly behind the bull, extended the stick, and, a moment later had caught the prong in the ring in the brute's nose.

"Now you've got him! Now you've got him, Dan!" cried the storekeeper, as he hastily drew his leg up. "Hold him tight! Don't let him get away!"

"I don't intend to."

"Take him away! Lead him way off!"

"I will. I'll take him back to the south pasture, where the fence is good and strong."

As soon as the bull felt the tugging of the ring in its sensitive nose it ceased its attempt to get at Mr. Lee. The big creature calmed down and allowed Dan to lead it away, though it did not go very willingly. Dan kept a firm hold of the stick, and, as long as he did so the bull could not approach him.

"You can come down now, Mr. Lee," said the boy as he started along the road with the animal.

"Do you think it would be safe?"

"Oh, yes, he can't get away from me now."

The storekeeper slid to the ground. He was a little stiff from his climbing, and running, and his clothes were rather out of place.

"I'd like to shoot you, you miserable creature!" he exclaimed, shaking his fist at the bull.

"It's too valuable an animal to shoot," said Dan.

"I don't care whether it is or not, I'd like to shoot it. And you can tell Peter Savage that I'm going to sue him and you too for the trouble you caused me."

"It was not my fault, Mr. Lee."

"I don't care whose fault it was, I'm going to sue. You did this on purpose, and I'll fix you for it too, Dan Hardy."

"But, Mr. Lee—"

"Don't you talk back to me. I said I'm going to fix you for this and I will."

Dan saw it would be of little use to further argue with the man, so he turned away and gave his whole attention to managing the bull, which was bellowing hoarsely and pawing the earth.

Mr. Lee kept on down the road, muttering to

himself, almost as angry, Dan thought, as was the bull.

"It wasn't my fault," remarked the boy to himself, "still I suppose I will be blamed for it."

Nor was his anticipation disappointed. When he had put the bull back in the south pasture where the animal had first been kept, he returned to the farm. Some news of what had happened had already preceded him.

"Wa'll, this is a pretty how-d'-do!" exclaimed Mr. Savage, as Dan went to the barn, where his master was feeding the horses for the night. "What ails ye, anyhow? Can't ye do anything right?"

"What do you mean, Mr. Savage?"

"Jest what I say. What made you let that bull out an' cause a lot of damage? Oh, I know all about it. Mrs. Dowden sent her boy over to see me, and she says I've got to pay for th' eggs th' bull smashed. It's all your fault."

"It wasn't," replied Dan firmly, but respectfully, "I did not know there was a loose place in the fence of the upper lot. You told me to let the bull in there and I did so. I could not help his breaking down the fence."

"Did ye put th' critter back safe?"

"Yes, sir, but it got Mr. Lee up a tree before I could do so," and then, fearing Mr. Savage might get a wrong account of the various happenings from the persons involved, Dan told exactly what had happened.

"Wa'al, ye're a nice sort of boy t' have around a farm, I must say!" exclaimed Mr. Savage sarcastically. "Ye're doin' more harm than ye be good! Now I s'pose I'll have a lot of damages t' pay. Why don't ye have some sense about ye? Good land o' Tunket! I'll be in the poorhouse ef I don't look out."

"I'm sorry it happened," said poor Dan. "I didn't—"

"Don't talk t' me!" interrupted Mr. Savage. "I've seen enough of ye fer one day. Here, ef ye kin do it without gittin' int' trouble, finish waterin' them hosses. I'm goin' t' th' village t' see ef I can't make some arrangement with Lee 'fore he sues me. He's liable t' do it."

Dan was in very low spirits. Everything seemed to be going against him, and it is not to his discredit to say that he cried just a little as he fed the horses, and gave them water. He was very lonely, and he missed his mother very much.

As he entered the stall of the chestnut mare, an

animal he frequently drove, the animal put her soft nose down on the boy's shoulder.

"Good Bess," he murmured. "I wonder if you care for me? There doesn't any one else seem to around here."

The mare whinnied, for she was fond of the boy, who was always kind to her.

Dan had little time for grief or reflection, however, as, before he was quite through with watering the animals, Mrs. Savage blew the horn for supper, the house being across the road from the barn. To the horn's strident note she added her own voice:

"Now come along lively, Dan. I can't keep supper all night fer a lazy, good-fer-nothin' boy. I want t' git th' dishes washed up, an' ye've got t' dry 'em. Hurry up with that work, an' don't dawdle over it all night."

Dan hurriedly finished with the horses and went into the house. The two hired men of the farm were already at the table, eating very fast, as if they feared some one would take the victuals away before they were through. They nodded to Dan who, after a hasty wash in the tin basin outside, took his place.

The kitchen was the room most in use in Mr.

Savage's house. There the meals were served, and, what little leisure time the hired men had, they spent there, when they were not at the village store, talking with their cronies.

The room was of fair size, and contained a large range, which made it very hot in summer time; a sink and pump, and a large mantlepiece, over which hung an old musket, that Mr. Savage said his grandfather had used in the Revolutionary War. Some of his acquaintances remarked that Mr. Savage was too cowardly to go to war himself, so he had no relics of the great Civil conflict.

Adjoining the kitchen was a sort of dairy and meal room, where Mrs. Savage kept the feed for numerous chickens. What with that, and the fact that a wood-shed, where fuel was kept, also opened out of this apartment, and with the hot stove and the smell of cooking, the kitchen was not the most cheerful place in the world.

"Don't be all night over yer meal now," said Mrs. Savage with a cross look at Dan. "Ye've made trouble enough as it is, an' Mr. Savage had t' go 'way without supper t' see Mr. Lee 'count of that bull. Ye've got t' help me with th' work, fer I'm goin' t' set bread."

Dan did not reply, and to the questions from

the hired men, who asked them when Mrs. Savage was out of the room, he told as little as possible of the bull incident.

"Never mind," consoled Jonas Hannock, one of the men, as he finished his piece of apple pie, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "Never mind, Dan. Bad luck can't last forever," for which little sympathy the boy was grateful.

He was tired, not only from his work on the farm, but from his chase after the bull, still he could not rest.

"Come now, git th' dishes picked up," called Mrs. Savage, before Dan was quite through. "Ye've been long enough. Ye might as well wash 'em too, while ye're at it. I kin git more work done then."

Of all the work about the farm or house Dan hated most of all doing the dishes, but there seemed to be no escape from it. With as good grace as possible he began at them, and he had about finished when Mrs. Savage exclaimed:

"There! I haven't got a yeast cake, Dan; ye'll have t' go t' th' village an' git one. Hurry too. Don't stand gawpin' along th' road. Tell Mr. Lee t' charge it."

This seemed the last straw. After his hard

day's work to be forced to take a four mile walk before he could go to bed!

"Shall I saddle the horse?" he asked timidly, thinking of how much easier it would be to gallop in on the back of Bess.

"Saddle a hoss? Wa'll, I guess not! Them hosses has done work enough fer one day."

Dan thought he had also.

He started off on the errand, vainly wishing Mrs. Savage had discovered the need of a yeast cake when Mr. Savage drove to the village, as he could have brought it back with him. Still, after he was started, walking along the highway in the pleasant summer evening, some of Dan's weariness left him.

As he neared the cross road, on which Dr. Maxwell lived, he heard some one walking on the hard highway.

"I wonder if that's the doctor," he thought. "No, it can't be. He always rides."

A few seconds later a man came into view. It was not very dark yet, and Dan easily recognized the stranger as the person who had asked him so many questions in the barn.

"Good evening," said Dan.

"Oh, it is the corn-sheller boy," remarked the

stranger. "How are you? Did you finish all that corn?"

"Yes, but I've got just as much more to do tomorrow."

"That's too bad. You seem to have to work pretty hard."

"Oh, well, I suppose all boys do."

"Not all, nor all men either."

"If you're looking for Dr. Maxwell's house, it's right down that road."

"What makes you think I am looking for his house?" and the man seemed annoyed.

"Well, you were asking about him—"

"That's all right. I don't want to see him. I just wanted to know where he lived, out of curiosity. But I'm in a hurry, so I'll have to leave you," and the man, who a moment ago seemed to have plenty of time, turned off in the other direction and hurried away.

"That's queer," thought Dan. "He acted as if he was mad because I told him where Dr. Maxwell lived. I wonder what he is doing in this neighborhood?"

CHAPTER V

THE OLD BLACKSMITH

DAN saw no prospect of his question being answered immediately, so, after listening to the retreating footsteps of the stranger he resumed his journey to the village.

" I hope Mr. Lee isn't in," said the boy to himself, as he neared the store. "He might say something unpleasant, and there are usually a lot of men in his place evenings. I hope I don't meet him until he has had a chance to forget about the bull."

As Dan was walking along the village street he was hailed by a youth about his own age.

"Hi, Dan! When ye goin' t' give an exhibition?"

"What sort of an exhibition, Tom?"

"Masterin' wild bulls! I herd ye was pretty good at it," and the boy laughed.

Dan knew by this that his experience with the animal, which had treed Mr. Lee, was pretty well known in the village. Still he hoped that he would not meet the storekeeper when he went in for the yeast cake. Nor did he, a clerk waiting on him and giving him what he wanted.

There was no sign of Mr. Lee about the store, which was filled with the usual crowd of loungers. Nobody, however, seemed to notice Dan.

"I'm glad I didn't see him," thought the boy as he was on his way home.

As Dan neared the place where he had met the mysterious stranger he thought he saw the figure of a man crossing the lots, near the turn of the road. He had half a notion to investigate, and see if it was the man who had appeared to take such an interest in him, but the thought of Mrs. Savage waiting for the yeast cake made him fear this would not be advisable. So he kept on, although as he walked along the grass by the roadside, he was almost sure he heard the footsteps of some one on the highway.

"Wa'al, why didn't ye stay all night?" demanded Mrs. Savage very ungraciously when Dan, who was very tired, came in. He did not answer, and, as there was no further demand

made on him, except to see that the henhouse was locked, he went up to bed.

Hard work is a good thing in one way, for it brings refreshing sleep. When Dan awoke the next morning he felt much better, physically and mentally. It was a bright, beautiful day, and when he was dressing he could hear the songs of birds, in the trees opposite his window.

"I hope things go well to-day," the boy thought. "I haven't got much to be thankful for, but I can be glad it isn't raining. Still, if it was, I suppose I'd have to shell corn in the barn."

He started to whistle a merry tune, but was rudely interrupted by a call from below:

"Come now!" cried Mr. Savage. "Going t' lay abed all day? Stir yer stumps up there, Dan. There's work t' be done, an' I hope ye don't expect me t' do all of it! Move lively, git yer breakfast an' shell some more corn!"

Dan hurried with his dressing, spent little time over his washing operations, and was soon hurrying with his breakfast. Everything seemed to be "hurry" with him. He had no time for leisure with such a task-master over him as Peter Savage.

Dan was about half through with his morning's work of shelling corn for the horses, when Mr. Savage appeared in the barn.

"Is that all ye got done?" he asked.

"I worked as fast as I could."

"Fast! Humph, I guess ye must a' turned it backward part of th' time. Now git a move on ye. Mrs. Savage want's ye t' go t' th' store fer some molasses. Don't be all day, nuther."

"Shall I hitch up?"

"Hitch up? Not much. Ye kin walk, can't ye?"

"Certainly, but I thought I might bring back some bran; we need it."

"I'll tend t' that. Hustle now, an' walk fast."

Dan did not mind the walk so much this morning, as it would rest his back from the wearisome labor of turning the corn sheller. He got the molasses jug and started off, striking up a whistling chorus.

"Oh, let up on that!" exclaimed Mrs. Savage who was in no very good humor, because the bread had not "come up" properly. "Boys is always makin' useless noises. Ye'll walk faster ef ye don't whistle, an' I want that molasses t' make a Johnny cake fer dinner."

Dan ceased his whistling until he was out of the hearing of Mrs. Savage, and then he began again.

"It looks as if I'd get into trouble again before

night," he thought. "I wonder what makes some people so mean, anyhow?"

Dan's meditation was interrupted by hearing a wagon coming behind him. He looked to see who it was, and the man driving the horse called out, at the sight of the boy:

"Hello, Dan. Going to the village, I suppose? Don't you want a ride? There's plenty of room."

"Thank you, Mr. Harrison. I wouldn't mind a lift," and Dan climbed up on the seat beside Holman Harrison, the village blacksmith, a kindly old man, and a veteran of the Civil War. He had known Dan's father and mother, and had been acquainted with Dan ever since the lad was a baby. In fact Mr. Harrison was the one person in the village whom Dan could think of as a friend.

"Going after vinegar?" asked the blacksmith, noticing the jug Dan carried.

"No, Mr. Harrison, molasses."

"Going to catch flies?"

"Catch flies? What do you mean?"

"Well, you know there's an old saying, that it's easier to catch flies with molasses than it is with vinegar, and I thought perhaps Mrs. Savage was going to try it."

"I guess she wouldn't waste vinegar or molasses that way. She'd drive the flies out with a broom."

"Yes, she and Peter are pretty 'close' I guess. How do you like it there?"

"It might be worse." Dan was not going to "tattle" about his employer.

"And that means it isn't very good," said the blacksmith shrewdly. "I know Peter Savage, and he's a hard man to work for. I wish I could help you, Dan, for the sake of your mother and father, who often did me good turns, but I can barely make a living for myself. Times are very hard. I had to walk five miles to-day to get the job of repairing this wagon. The man said if I'd come after it I could fix it for him, so I tramped after it, borrowed his horse and I'm taking the wagon to my shop. When I get it fixed I'll drive back with it. Otherwise you wouldn't see me riding around like this. As it is I'll have to walk back."

"I hope you will meet some one who will give you a lift," said Dan, with a smile.

"Perhaps I will. Still I'm good and strong yet, if I am old, and have a bullet in my leg from the battle of Antietam. I can limp along with the best of 'em."

"Does it hurt you very much?"

"Only just before a storm. Curious, but that Confederate bullet is as good as a barometer. I can tell for sure when it's going to rain. When I can't make a living blacksmithing any more I'm going to hire out as a weather prophet," and the veteran laughed heartily at his misfortune.

The two chatted pleasantly during the ride, the blacksmith, at Dan's request, relating some of his war experiences. In turn Mr. Harrison sought to draw from the boy something about his life at the Savage farm, but Dan was not the one to complain, even if he did have it hard.

"I know it can't be very pleasant there for you," said the old soldier, "and I wish I could take you with me, but, as I said, I have hard enough work to get along. Still, Dan, don't forget I'm your friend, no matter what happens, and if I can ever do anything for you, just let me know."

A little later they drove into the village, and, as Mr. Harrison turned the horse down the side street leading to his shop, Dan saw the mysterious stranger standing in front of Mr. Johnson's shoe store.

"There he is again!" exclaimed the boy. "I wonder what he can be doing around here."

"That man," and Dan pointed to him.

"What? Do you know him too?"

"Well, I don't exactly know him, but I've talked with him," and Dan related what had passed between himself and the man. "Do you know who he is, Mr. Harrison?"

"No, except he says he's an inventor. He came into my place yesterday, and got me to fix some sort of a tool. I never saw one like it before. It was like a long chisel, or a big tack lifter. I thought it might be for taking up carpets, and I asked him, but he said it was a new tool he had invented, and that he wasn't at liberty to tell me what it was for. It had broken in two, and I welded it together for him. When I saw he didn't want to talk, I didn't ask him any more questions. He's a queer man, but he seems to have plenty of money. But, if you're going to Mr. Lee's store, you'd better get out here. Sorry I can't give you a ride back."

"You've given me a good lift as it was," said Dan, as he alighted with the molasses jug. The blacksmith turned off into another street, and, as Dan started for the general store, he saw the stranger waving his hand to some one. Turning to see who it was, Dan beheld a rather poorly

dressed individual join the man in front of the shoe store.

"Well, he evidently knows some one in the village," thought Dan.

CHAPTER VI

SOME BAD MONEY

FEELING that he had no time to lose watching the movements of the stranger and the poorly dressed man, though he vaguely wondered what their objects might be, Dan hurried on to Hank Lee's store. He saw the proprietor behind the counter.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" exclaimed Mr. Lee, in rather a surly tone, as he saw Dan. "I hope you haven't got any wild bulls outside."

"No, sir," answered Dan, unable to repress a smile at the thought of Mr. Lee up a tree.

"What you grinnin' at?" demanded the storekeeper sourly. "I s'pose you think it's funny to see men chased by a bull."

"No, sir; I'm sorry you had to run."

"Had to run? I didn't have to run. I could a' stood still, and fought that bull, if I'd a minded to, but I had some money in my pocket, from col-

lectin' a bill, and I didn't want to lose it. I wasn't afraid of that bull, and I don't want you to git that notion into your head, either."

Dan thought it wisest to say nothing on this score, though he was very certain Mr. Lee had been very much frightened by the angry beast.

"I'll tell you what it is," went on the storekeeper, "if you ever play a trick like that on me again I'll have you arrested, that's what I'll do."

"It wasn't a trick, Mr. Lee."

"Don't tell me. I know better. What do you want?"

"I want a quarter's worth of molasses."

"Well, give me the jug."

Dan handed it to the storekeeper who filled it from a barrel in one corner of the store.

"Where's the money?" demanded Mr. Lee. 'I ain't goin' to trust Peter Savage any more. He owes me money now, an' when I sue him for the damage the bull done to me he'll owe me more. I've got to have cash for things, an' you can tell him so."

Perhaps Mrs. Savage had anticipated that something like this might come to pass, for, contrary to her usual custom, she had given Dan the money to pay for the molasses.

"Here's the quarter," spoke the boy, tossing the coin on the counter.

It fell with a curious, dull thud, and not with a ring, such as silver gives out. Mr. Lee took up the money, looked at it closely, threw it down on the counter again to listen to the sound it made, and then announced:

"Don't try none of your tricks on me, Dan Hardy."

"Tricks? What do you mean? I'm not playing any tricks."

"Then what do you mean by giving me bad money? That's a counterfit twenty-five cent piece, an' you knowed it."

"I didn't know anything of the kind, and I don't believe it's bad."

"You don't, eh? Listen to that sound!"

Again Mr. Lee rang the coin on the counter. It gave forth a dull tinkle. Dan had to acknowledge the coin did not have the right sound.

"I'm not goin' to give molasses for bad money," went on Mr. Lee.

"I haven't any other."

"Then you will have to go back fer more. Made me draw a gallon of molasses fer nothin'. I'll keep the jug until its paid for."

"Mrs. Savage will be angry if I don't bring her back the molasses."

"What do I care?"

"If you let me take the molasses back with me, I'll tell Mr. Savage that the money he gave me, or, rather which Mrs. Savage gave me, was no good. I'll bring you another quarter as soon as I can."

Dan determined to do the best he could to fulfill his errand, even if it was not his fault that the storekeeper would not trust the old farmer.

"Wa'll, I s'pose that'll have to do."

The truth was Mr. Lee did not like to lose trade, and, though Mr. Savage owed him quite a bill, he knew he would be paid in time. If he did not accommodate the farmer's wife they might take their trade elsewhere.

"You tell Peter Savage he'd better be careful how he circulates counterfeit money," went on Mr. Lee, as he gave Dan back the quarter, and passed over the jug of molasses. "An' be sure an' bring me a good quarter as soon as ye kin."

"Yes, sir," replied Dan. "I wonder where that bad money came from?" he thought as he started for home.

Though he had done the errand in much less time than usual, because of the ride Mr. Harrison

had given him, Dan was scolded by Mrs. Savage when he got in.

"I never see such a lazy boy!" she exclaimed. "Did ye stop t' make th' molasses?"

"I came pretty near not getting it," said Dan, and he told her of the incident of the bad quarter. As he had anticipated, that caused Mrs. Savage more astonishment than did the reported refusal of Mr. Lee to extend any more credit, for though Mr. Savage was wealthy he delayed as long as he could the paying of debts.

"That quarter bad!" she exclaimed, as Dan handed it to her. "I don't believe it!"

But when she tested it carefully she had to admit that it was.

"Wa'al, of all things!" she cried. "That's a swindle, and I'll have th' law on that man!"

"Who gave it to Mr. Savage?" asked Dan.

"Who? Why that pesky book agent that was askin' ye so many questions. Pa—which was what she called her husband—give it to me fer grocery money. Now it's bad! Wa'll ye'll have t' make it up, that's all. It was your fault that we got it."

"I don't see how you can say that."

"Ye don't, eh? well I say it, jest th' same, an' I

tell ye what, ye've got t' pay us back in some way."

"What's th' matter?" inquired Mr. Savage, coming in from the barn. "Hey, Dan! Ain't ye back at shellin' corn yet? Land sakes! I never see sech a lazy boy!"

"Look a-here!" exclaimed Mrs. Savage. "This quarter's a counterfeit," and she quickly told the story of it.

"Land o' Tunket!" cried Mr. Savage. "I've been swindled, that's what I have. That was a slick feller, what was talkin' t' ye that day, Dan. It's all your fault, too. Ef ye hadn't been so ready t' answer his questions he'd a gone on about his business, an' I wouldn't be out a quarter. It's all your fault."

As the quarter had been given for a few minutes of Dan's not very valuable time, it was hard to understand where Mr. Lee was out of pocket. But, like most unreasonable men, if he once believed a thing, he seldom changed his mind.

"Shall I take a good quarter back to Mr. Lee?" asked Dan. "I promised him I would."

"Wa'al, I guess not. Ye've loafed enough fer one day. I'll take him a quarter when I git good an' ready. Now ye'd better start t' weedin' th' onion patch. It needs it, an' don't be all day about

it, nuther. Step lively, I never see sech a lazy boy!"

Dan did not reply, but, as he went to the big onion patch, which he hated almost as much as he did the corn sheller, he could not help thinking of the man who had given his employer the counterfeit money.

"There's something queer about that man," thought Dan. "He isn't what he seems to be, a book agent. I wonder if he can be a counterfeiter?"

CHAPTER VII

A TELEPHONE MESSAGE

SEVERAL days after this, during which time Dan had been kept very busy about the farm, and helping Mrs. Savage with the housework, a neighbor called to him as he was hoeing the potatoes in the garden patch.

"Say, Dan, is Mr. Savage in the house?"

"I think so, sir; did you want to see him?"

"Well, not exactly, but some one has just called him up on my telephone, and they want to talk to him. I don't see why he doesn't get a telephone of his own. Too mean, I suppose. I had to leave off fixing a set of harness and come running over to tell him."

"It's too bad you had that trouble," responded Dan. "I will call him."

Dan dropped his hoe and started for the house.

"Tell him to hurry," advised the man. "Whoever it is that's calling him has to hold the wire, and that costs money."

"Mr. Savage will not like that."

"Oh, well, he doesn't have to pay for the time. The person who called him up has to foot the bill."

"Then I'll tell him to hurry so as to save all the expense he can."

"Very well, I'll go back to my work."

Dan found his employer trying to sew up a rip in one of his shoes, for Mr. Savage hated to spend money on anything, and repairing his own footwear was one of the ways he endeavored to save.

"Some one wants to speak to you on the telephone, Mr. Savage."

"Telephone? What telephone?"

"The one in Mr. Lane's house."

"Want's to speak to me on th' telephone? I wonder who it can be? Nobody would want to telephone me."

"You had better hurry," advised Dan. "It costs money to hold the wire."

"Hold th' wire? Costs money? Say, ef anybody thinks I'm goin' t' waste money t' talk over one of them things, they're mighty much mistaken. I ain't got no money t' throw away on sech foolishness," and he was about to proceed with his shoe mending.

"No, no, it doesn't cost you anything," explained Dan. "The person who called you up has to pay."

"Oh, that's different. Wa'al, I guess I might as well go then," and he leisurely laid aside the shoe, the piece of leather and needle.

"I think you had better hurry," said Dan respectfully.

"Hurry? What fer? Didn't ye say th' other fellow was payin' fer it? I ain't got no call t' hurry. It don't cost me nothin', an' ef folks calls me up they has t' wait till I git good an' ready t' answer."

There was no use trying to combat such a mean argument as Dan felt this to be, so he said nothing, but went back to resume his hoeing, before Mr. Savage would have a chance to scold him for being lazy.

"I wish some one would call me up on the telephone, and tell me they had a good job for me—somewhere else besides on a farm," thought Dan, as he bent to his work. "I wonder how it seems to talk over a wire. It must be queer."

When he found out he did not have to pay for the telephone message Mr. Savage proceeded slowly down the road to Mr. Lane's house. Though he pretended he was not anxious, the old

miserly farmer was, nevertheless, quite excited in wondering who could want to talk to him.

"Maybe it's a message from th' police, to say that th' feller what give me that bad quarter has been arrested," he murmured as he approached the house. "I hope it is. I'd like t' see him git ten years. It was a mean trick t' play on me."

"You'd better hurry," advised Mr. Lane, as he saw Mr. Savage coming up the front walk. "The party on the other end of the wire is getting impatient."

"Wa'al, folks what bothers me at my work has t' wait", spoke up Mr. Savage, in rather a surly tone, and he did not thank Mr. Lane for his trouble in calling him to the telephone.

Mr. Savage took up the receiver, and fairly shouted into the transmitter:

"Hello: Who be ye? What ye want?"

"Not so loud," cautioned Mr. Lane. "They can hear you better if you speak lower."

But Mr. Savage paid no attention. However he ceased to shout, as the person on the other end of the wire was talking. The farmer listened intently. Then he began to reply:

"Yes, yes," he said. "I s'pose I kin do it, but it takes my time. Yes, ye can tell her I'll send it.

Guess I'll have t' let Dan bring it over. I'll send him t'night so's t' save time."

Then he hung up the receiver.

"No bad news, I hope?" asked Mrs. Lane politely.

"Yes, 'tis," replied Mr. Savage. "My sister Lucy, over t' Pokesville, was took suddenly sick this mornin'. That was her husband telephonin' t' me. Lucy wants a bottle of our old family pain-killer. I ain't got none in th' house, nuther, an' I've got t' go t' th' village an' git it. That's goin' t' take a lot of time."

"Is she very sick?"

"Pretty bad, I guess, th' way her husband talked," but Mr. Savage did not seem to regard this so much as he did the loss of his time.

"He didn't say nothin' about pay, nuther," he went on. "I've got t' put out my money fer th' medicine, an' goodness knows when I'll get it back. Then I've got t' let Dan Hardy take th' medicine over. Land sakes! But sickness is a dreadful nuisance! I don't see what wimen is allers gittin' sick fer."

"Probably she couldn't help it," said Mr. Lane, who was indignant at the lack of feeling on the part of Mr. Savage.

"Wa'al, mebby not. But it takes my time an' money just th' same. But I'll make Dan travel by night, so he won't lose any time."

"No, it would be too bad if he had a few hours off," said Mr. Lane in a sarcastic manner, which, however, was lost on Mr. Savage.

"I'm—I'm much obliged fer callin' me," said the old farmer as he started away. It seemed as if it hurt him to say those words, so crusty was he.

"Oh, you're welcome," replied Mr. Lane coldly.

Mr. Savage found his wife much excited, waiting for him to return and tell her about the message, for she had learned from Dan where her husband had gone.

"Has any one died an' left ye money?" was her first question.

"No sech luck," replied Mr. Savage. "I've got t' spend money as 'tis."

"Can't ye send the medicine by express, collect?" asked Mrs. Savage when her husband told of his sister's illness.

"Wish I could, but there ain't no express that goes that way. No, I've got t' send Dan."

Mr. Savage began his preparations to go to the village after the old family pain-killer, a mix-

ture that had been used by himself and his relatives as far back as he could remember. It was taken for almost every thing, as few people care to call in a doctor every time they feel ill.

"You'll have t' go over t' Pokeville t'night, Dan," said the farmer, as he was driving to the village, and he explained the reason. "Ye kin go hoss back, an' that'll be quicker," he added.

"It will take nearly all night to go there and return, Mr. Savage."

"Wa'al, I can't help it. Ye ought t' be back here by five o'clock, an' ye kin git an hour's sleep, an' start in t' work. Boys don't need much rest."

"No, nor not much else, if you had your way," thought Dan. "Oh, I've a good notion to run away, only I don't know where to run to. I must see Mr. Harrison, and ask his advice," and, pondering over his hard lot, Dan continued to hoe the potatoes.

CHAPTER VIII

A MIDNIGHT RIDE

MR. SAVAGE took his time in going to the village, and did not come back until after the dinner hour.

"Did ye git th' medicine?" asked Mrs. Savage of her husband.

"Yep, an' it cost a dollar."

"Tell Dan t' ask yer sister fer it 'fore he delivers th' bottle," advised the farmer's wife.

"I guess that would be a good way," decided Mr. Savage, brightening up. "I kin charge fer my time, too. I'll have him ask a dollar an' a half. That won't be so bad," and he rubbed his hands in satisfaction over the idea.

It was getting dusk when Dan started away on the back of the mare Bess. He had been obliged to do all his chores before starting, for Mr. Savage never thought of such a thing as omitting any of the farm work for the sake of his sick sister.

"Now don't ride th' mare t' death," cautioned Mr. Savage as Dan rode out of the barn. "Ye've got all night, an' th' trip'll de ye good."

Dan had his doubts about this, but he said nothing.

"I wonder if Mrs. Randall is very sick?" the boy said to himself as he was going along the highway toward Pokeville in the dusk. "If I had a sister who was ill I wouldn't wait until night to send her medicine. Pokeville is so far away from any stores and doctors she might die before help could reach her. I wonder what time I'll get there? I don't know the roads very well, and, from what the hired men said, they don't either. Seems to me Mr. Savage could have driven over this afternoon by daylight. But I suppose he did not want to waste the time."

Thus pondering, Dan rode on. It was quite lonesome, for in the country, people do not travel after dark unless they have to, and there was no occasion for many to be out this evening.

Dan met a few farmers whom he knew, and spoke to them, but, after a while, it got so dark he could not distinguish faces, even had he passed any one, which did not happen once he got well outside of Hayden.

The mare plodded on, Dan stopping now and then to look at sign boards to make sure he was on the right road. About ten o'clock he came to a place where four highways met. He got off the mare's back and lighted matches to read what the signs might have on them. In the uncertain light he thought he read, "Pokeville three miles," with a finger pointing to the east.

"Well, that's not so bad," he murmured. "I can do three miles in half an hour, and I may get back home in time to sleep."

He mounted the mare again, and started off at a smart trot. He soon began to look for some signs of a village, but after he had ridden nearly an hour, and all there was to be seen was the dark road, he began to have his doubts.

"I wonder if I am going the right direction?" he asked himself. "Bess, don't you know?"

The mare whinnied an answer, but what it was, Dan, of course, could not tell.

"I'll keep on until I come to a house," he decided, "and then I'll ask my way."

About ten minutes after this he came to a lonely residence, standing beside the road. It was all dark, and the boy disliked to knock and arouse the inmates, but he felt it was a case of necessity.

Dismounting, and taking care not to smash the bottle of medicine in his coat pocket, he pounded on the door. The persons inside must have been sound sleepers, for it was nearly five minutes before a window was raised, and a man, thrusting his head out, asked:

"Well, what's the matter? What do you want?"

"I am sorry to trouble you," said Dan, "but is this the road to Pokeville?"

"Land sakes no!" exclaimed the man. "You're five miles out of your way. What's the trouble?"

"I am taking some medicine to a sick woman over there, and I looked at a sign post some five miles back. I thought it said Pokeville was in this direction."

"I see, you made the same mistake other persons make. There's a town called Hokeville, which is on this road. Lots of people look at the sign in a hurry, and think it says Pokeville."

"I should think they'd make the letters big enough so people could read them easily," remarked Dan.

That's what they ought to."

"What's the matter? Is the house afire?" demanded a woman sticking her head out beside that of the man.

"No, no, Mandy. Every time there's any excitement at night you think there's a fire."

"Well, the chimbley was on fire onct!"

"Yes, but it isn't now. This is a boy inquiring his way to Pokeville. Some one is sick and he's taking her some medicine."

"Who's sick, boy?" asked the woman, determined not to miss a chance to hear some news, even if she had been awakened from sleep.

"Mrs. Randall."

"What, not Lucy Randall, she that was a Savage?"

"She's Mr. Savage's sister."

"Do tell! What's the mattter with her?"

"I don't know, ma'am."

"If you'll go back about a mile, an' take the first road you come to, an' then go along that until ye come to an' old grist mill, an' then take th' first turn to the left, an' the second to the right after that, ye'll git on th' right road to Pokeville," said the man.

"I'm afraid I can't remember all that," replied Dan.

The man repeated it for him, and at last the boy thought he could find his way. He thanked his informant and started off, the woman calling after him:

"Tell Lucy that Mandy Perkins, her that married a Linton, was askin' fer her."

"I will," promised Dan.

He hurried Bess along through the dark night, and along the unfamiliar road. He got as far as the grist mill, which he could dimly distinguish, and then he was at a loss. He might have taken the wrong road again, but, fortunately a farmer unexpectedly came along and directed him.

It was past midnight when Dan rode into the village of Pokeville. It seemed as if every one was asleep as he trotted through the lonely main street. Now and then a dog barked, or a rooster crowed, but that was the only sign of life. Dan knew his way now, for Mr. Savage had given him directions how to find the house of Mrs. Randall. It was close to one o'clock when the youth knocked at the door. He expected to find the house lighted up, since some one in it was ill.

"I wonder if she can be—worse or dead," he murmured. "It seems very quiet."

Some one must have been up, however, for, a few moments after his pounding on the front door had awakened the echoes of the silent house, an upper window was raised and a head thrust out.

"Everyone seems afraid to open their front doors after dark," thought the lad.

"Well, what's wanted?" asked a man's voice.

"Here is the medicine from Mr. Savage."

"Oh! All right. I'll be right down," and the man drew in his head. A woman's at once replaced it.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"I'm Dan Hardy. I work for Mr. Savage. He sent me with the medicine for his sister."

"I'm his sister, but a lot of good the medicine will do me now. I'm all over my pain. What kept you so long?"

"I lost my way in the dark."

"Humph! That's a fine excuse! More likely you stopped to play. You ought to have been here at nine o'clock."

"I did not start until nearly seven, madam."

"I don't care. You were so long that my pain all went away, and I don't need the medicine now. You're a lazy boy, Dan Hardy, my brother says so! The idea of keeping me suffering while you loitered on the road."

"I did not loiter. I came as quickly as I could."

"I don't believe you. You did it on purpose to make me suffer. I'll tell my brother."

By this time the man had opened the door, and had taken the bottle of medicine.

"Mr. Savage says it will be a dollar and a half,"

said Dan, giving the message he had been instructed to deliver.

"What's that?" inquired Mrs. Randall from above. "A dollar and a half? You can take it right back again. I'll never pay a dollar and a half for medicine, and you can tell my brother so. Give it right back to him, Sam, I insist on it."

The man did not seem to know what to do, but stood holding the medicine in one hand, and a lamp in the other.

"Do you hear?" called Mrs. Randall. "Give it right back to that lazy boy, and he can take it home again. If it had come in time to do me any good I'd a kept it, but I won't now. My pain is all gone, and I'm not going to waste a dollar and a half. Give it back, I say."

Looking rather ashamed the man handed the bottle to Dan.

"I guess you'll have to take it back," he said

CHAPTER IX

THE MYSTERIOUS MEN

THERE was no help for it. Dan could not make the Randalls take the medicine, though he knew when he got back to Mr. Savage, he would be blamed for their failure to keep it.

"Come on in and shut the door, Sam," commanded the woman sharply. "First thing you know you'll catch cold, and then you'll have to take medicine."

"If he does I hope I don't have to bring it," thought Dan.

"Good night," said Mr. Randall, as he closed the door and locked it. Overhead Mrs. Randall slammed down the window.

"And they didn't even say thank you," mused Dan as he put the bottle into his pocket and mounted Bess.

Certainly it was a very mean way to treat him, for he had done his best. He was glad that Mrs.

Randall had recovered, but he knew Mr. Savage would think less of that than the fact that he had spent a dollar for medicine, and was not likely to get it back.

"Maybe he'll keep the bottle for himself," thought Dan. "In that case he'll not be so angry at me for bringing it back." But this was a remote possibility.

The only consolation the boy had was that he had done his best. That he was late was no fault of his, for any one might have been deceived about the roads.

Tired and hungry, for the ride gave him a hearty appetite, Dan started back. He thought his employer's sister might at least have asked him to come in after his long journey, and have given him something to eat. But Mrs. Randall was not that kind of a person. Her husband was a good-hearted man, but his wife ruled him, and he was somewhat afraid of her.

"Well, I don't believe I'll get lost going back, anyhow," thought the boy. "That's one comfort."

Dan rode on for several miles. He passed through the town of Marsden, and knew he was within about an hour's ride of home. It was still

very dark, and the sky was overcast with clouds.

"I guess I'll get a chance to sleep before I have to do the chores," the lad reasoned. "Maybe I'll stay out in the barn after I put Bess up. I can snuggle down in the hay, and I'll not disturb Mr. Savage. I'd never get any sleep if I told him his sister wouldn't take the medicine."

Deciding on this plan Dan called to Bess to quicken her pace. As he went around a turn in the road, the soft dust deadening the hoof-beats of the mare, the boy saw a mass of dark shadows just ahead of him.

"Looks like a wagon," he decided. "Probably some farmer around here making an early start for market."

Bess settled into a slow walk, for the mare was tired, and Dan did not urge her. Just then the moon, which had risen late, shone dimly through a rift in the clouds. Dan was in the shadow cast by some willow trees, and he could see quite plainly now, that there were several men and a wagon, just ahead of him.

The wagon stood in the middle of the road, which at that point, was lined with woods on either side.

"Maybe they've had a break-down," said Dan

"THEY'RE HIDING STUFF," DAN REASONED.—*Page* 73.

to himself. "Perhaps I might be able to help them."

He was about to ride forward when he saw one of the men take a bundle from the wagon, run across the road with it, and disappear in the woods.

"That's funny," thought the boy. "What can he be doing?"

A moment later another man did the same thing, carrying what seemed to be a heavy bundle. A third man remained on the wagon.

Dan saw that by keeping on one side of the road he would be in the shadow and could remain hidden until quite close to the mysterious men. Softly he urged Bess forward, the horse making no sound.

Once more he saw the men approach the wagon, take something out, and disappear in the woods with it.

"They're hiding stuff," Dan reasoned. "I wonder if they're chicken thieves?"

Several henhouses had been robbed of late in the vicinity of Hayden, and Dan was on the alert.

"If it was hens they had," he went on, "I could hear some noise made by the fowls cackling or flapping their wings. Whatever they have doesn't make any noise."

For perhaps the fourth time the mysterious men made a trip fom the wagon into the woods. When the two returned the man on the wagon seat inquired:

"Well, got it all planted?"

"Yes, and planted good and deep," was the reply.

"Come on then," and the two who had carried the bundles got into the wagon, the horse being whipped to a gallop at once.

"Well, that's queer," decided Dan, as he saw the wagon vanish amid the shadows. "They were planting stuff, but what sort of stuff would they plant at night, and where could they plant it in the woods? There's something queer back of this. I wish I could find out what it was, but I can't stop now, or I'll not get back to the farm before sunrise."

He looked to make sure none of the men remained behind, and then he rode up to where the wagon had halted. There were visible in the dust by the dim moonlight, the marks of many feet, and the bushes on one side of the road were trampled down, showing where the men had entered the woods.

A gleam of something shining in the dust at-

tracted Dan's attention. He got off the mare and picked it up.

"A silver spoon;" he exclaimed as he examined it. Perhaps those fellows were silverware peddlers and were hiding their stock in trade until they could come for it. Well, it doesn't concern me, and I guess I'd better be going. I'll keep this spoon for a souvenir."

He thrust it into his pocket, jumped on the back of Bess, and was off down the road. He kept a lookout for the wagon containing the men, but it seemed to have turned off down a side road.

Dan reached the farm just as it was getting dawn. He put the mare in her stall, after watering and feeding her, and then crawled up into the hay-mow, hoping to get a little sleep before it would be time to start on his day's work.

He must have slept quite soundly, for the sun was shining into the barn when he was awakened by hearing Mr. Savage exclaim:

"Wa'al, I wonder what keeps that lazy boy?" Then the farmer caught sight of the mare in her stall. "Why, he's back! I wonder where's he hidin'? Loafin' again, that's what he is!"

"Here I am, Mr. Savage," spoke Dan, sliding down from the pile of hay.

"What in th' name a' Tunket be ye doin' thar?"

"I did not want to disturb you by coming into the house, so I slept out here."

"Thought ye'd git a longer chance t' lay abed, I s'pose. Did ye git th' dollar an' a half?"

Mr. Savage thought more of the money than he did of the condition of his sister, as was evidenced by his question.

"No, I didn't get it," answered Dan.

"Ye don't mean t' say ye lost it? Lost a dollar an' a half! If ye have—"

"They wouldn't give it to me. She did not need the medicine, as she was better."

"Didn't want th' medicine, after I bought it fer her? Why, good land a' Tunket: She has t' take it!"

"She said it came too late."

"Then it's your fault, Dan Hardy! Ye loitered on th' road, until my sister got better. Now I'm out a dollar an' a half through you! I'll make ye pay—"

Then Mr. Hardy seemed to remember that Dan never had any money, and could not pay for the medicine.

"I'll—I'll get it outer ye somehow," he threat-

ened. "Th' idea of wastin' time, an' makin' me throw away a dollar an' a half!"

"Can't you keep the medicine until you or Mrs. Savage need it?" asked Dan, trying to see a way out of the difficulty.

"Keep it? Why I might have it in th' house six months an' never need it. I ain't never sick, an' there is my money all tied up in a bottle of medicine. It's a shame, that's what 'tis! Wimmin folks hadn't oughter git sick! Now ye'd better git t' work. Them onions need weedin' agin."

"I haven't had my breakfast, Mr. Savage."

"Wa'al, ye don't deserve any, but I s'pose ye got t' have it. Go int' th' house, but hustle."

The boy, who resented this way of being talked to, started for the kitchen, where he knew he was likely to meet sour words and angry looks from Mrs. Savage.

"I s'pose I'd better put this bottle away where it won't git busted," murmured Mr. Savage, as he followed Dan. "I'm goin' t' write t' Lucy, an' see if I can't make her pay me fer half of it anyhow."

Dan thought his employer would have hard work making Mrs. Randall pay.

As the boy and the farmer were crossing the road to the house, they saw a man coming along

the highway, riding a horse, which he was urging to a gallop.

"That's Dr. Maxwell's hired man," observed Mr. Savage. "I wonder what's the matter?"

The man was opposite them now.

"What's the matter, Silas?" called Mr. Savage.

"Burglars!" exclaimed Silas. "Dr. Maxwell's house was robbed last night, an' all the silverware stolen! I'm goin' t' th' village after th' constables!"

CHAPTER X

HANK LEE'S INFORMATION

FOR a moment the news came as such a shock to Dan and Mr. Savage that they did not know what to say. Robberies in the country are few and far between, consequently they create more excitement than they do in the city.

"Dr. Maxwell's house robbed!" repeated Mr. Savage.

"Yep," replied Silas Martin, the hired man, who also drove the physician on his sick calls. Silas pulled up his horse. It was the first chance he had had to tell the news, and he was not going to miss it, even if the doctor had told him to hurry.

"When did they discover it?" inquired Dan.

"This mornin', I found it out. I was up early, 'cause the doctor has t' make a long trip this mornin' an' I see th' dinin' room winder up a bit. I knowed it was locked last night, an' I got suspicious."

"I should think ye would," commented Mr. Savage.

"Yep, I was," went on Silas, evidently very proud of what he had done. "I seen th' winder was up, an' I was suspicious. I looked around an' I seen all th' silverware was gone!"

"Land sakes! Do tell!" exclaimed Mrs. Savage, who had left her morning's work, on seeing Silas stop, and had come out to hear the news.

"Every bit," went on the hired man. "Then I yelled, an' th' doctor an' his wife come down stairs. Some of their jewelery was gone, too. I tell ye them thieves got most a thousand dollars' wuth of stuff!"

"And they got in through the dining room window," remarked Dan.

"How'd ye know?" asked Silas quickly.

"Didn't you say it was open?"

"That's so. I did. Yep, them thieves pried it up with some kind of a crowbar, or a big screwdriver, or maybe a tack lifter. Ye could see th' marks on the sill. They broke the catch."

"Didn't ye hear any sound in th' night?" asked Mrs. Savage.

"I didn't" replied Silas, "but then I'm a turrible

heavy sleeper. I guess th' doctor didn't nuther, fer he didn't say nothin' about it."

"Were any suspicious characters seen around?" asked Dan, as he suddenly thought of something.

"Not as I know of. But I've got to git along an' tell th' constables. Th' doctor told me t' hurry. He tried t' git 'em on th' telephone, but I guess there ain't nobody up at th' town hall yit, fer they didn't answer."

"What all did ye say was stole?" asked Mrs. Savage, for she had missed part of the recital.

"I'll stop and tell ye on my way back," called Silas, as he urged the horse to a gallop.

"Wa'al, of all things!" remarked Mr. Savage, as the hired man rode away. "Fust thing we know we'll all be murdered in our beds."

"Oh, dear! Don't talk that way, Peter," begged his wife, who was very nervous. "What's that package?"

"Oh, that's th' medicine Lucy wouldn't take," and Mr. Savage, who had momentarily forgotten all about the pain-killer, told Mrs. Savage of Dan's trip. The two were so indignant over the outcome, partly blaming the boy for taking the wrong road, and partly blaming Mr. Savage's sister, that they took little notice of Dan, who hurried into the

house and got his breakfast, rather a slim one, which was being kept warm on the stove.

Then, wishing to be alone, to get a chance to think, Dan took his hoe and went to a distant cornfield to work.

"I wonder if those queer men I saw, who were hiding something in the woods, weren't the ones who robbed Dr. Maxwell's house?" thought Dan. "They certainly acted very suspiciously. I believe they were. I wonder what I had better do?"

He pondered over it until he got to the end of a long row.

"I suppose I had better tell Mr. Savage," he went on. Yet, if I do, he'll say I was loitering along the road. Perhaps I'd better go into the village, and inform the constables. They at least, would be glad of the information, but I don't believe Mr. Savage would even thank me."

Once more Dan indulged in some hard thinking.

"I suppose I could tell Dr. Maxwell," he went on to himself, "but it's farther to go to his house than it is to the village, "I guess I'd better tell the constables, and not bother Mr. Savage. That's what I'll do. As soon as I get a chance I'll slip into the village. But I must finish hoeing this corn,

or I'll be in for another lecture on my lazy habits."

In the meantime Silas Martin had proceeded to the village to inform the authorities of the robbery. There were no police in Hayden. Instead their place was taken by two rather elderly constables, Jacob Wolff and Frederick Walker. They both thought themselves as good as any regular police that ever wore brass buttons, and Mr. Wolff, in particular, imagined he was quite a detective.

Silas found the two constables in Hank Lee's store, which they used as a sort of headquarters, since the town hall was rather lonesome, few persons calling there. At the store the constables could be sure of meeting many friends and hearing all the news there was.

"Come on, quick! Out t' Dr. Maxwell's," Silas called to the officers.

"What's the matter. Has he been murdered?" asked Jacob Wolff who was always on the lookout for big sensations.

"No, but he's been robbed. He wants you t' come right away."

"I s'pose he wants me t' arrest th' robber." said Frederick Walker. "I'll do it right off. I can do it alone, Jake," addressing his companion. "Ye needn't come. Guess I'm a match fer any robber.

I've got my badge an' my revolver," and he looked at the big nickel-plated star on his breast, and pulled out an old horse pistol.

"There ain't no robber t' arrest," spoke Silas with a grin. "He got away, an' took all th' doctor's silver with him."

"Got away, eh?" exclaimed Jacob Wolff. "Then it's a mystery. It's me they want, Fred, not you. Th' doctor has heard of my detective abilities. Are there any clues?" he asked of Silas.

"Clues? What's them?"

" Did the robbers leave anything behind so's I could indentify 'em?"

"You mean did they leave their names an' addresses?"

"No, of course not! Who ever heard of robbers doin' that? I mean did they leave any marks, footprints, or anything belonging to 'em?"

"They left some marks of a screwdriver or suthin' on th' winder sill, where they pried th' winder up," replied Silas.

"Nothing else?"

"Wa'al, th' doctor found a strange handkerchief under th' winder."

"That a clue!" exclaimed Jacob Wolff eagerly. "That's a clue! I'll go right out, an' look at it."

"I don't see what good it'll do," observed Silas. "It's jest a plain handkerchief, with nothin' on it."

"Never you mind," declared Constable Wolff. "Real detectives can see clues where other folks can't see nothin'. I'll have a look at that clue."

"An' I'll go along an' arrest th' robber when ye find him," volunteered his companion. "I reckon between us both, Jake, we'll be able t' land him behind th' bars."

"Wait until I see that clue," said Constable Wolff, with a mysterious air.

"Guess you won't need much of a clue to tell who robbed the doctor's house," suddenly remarked Hank Lee, who had been listening to the talk.

"Not need any clues? Of course I need clues," replied Constable Wolff.

"Not to my way of thinking."

"Why not? Do you mean t' say ye know who the robber was?"

"Well, I can come pretty near guessing. If you was to ask Dan Hardy what he was doing out all night last night an' what he has in a bundle that he took such care of, an' why he was riding horse back before sun-up this morning, I reckon he'd be some embarrassed to answer you," went on Hank.

"Do you mean Dan robbed that house?" asked Constable Walker, while Silas and Jacob looked astonished.

"Well, I'm not going to make any charge, for it might get me into trouble, and he'd sue me. But I'll tell what I know about it. I got up quite early this morning because I had the toothache, and I wanted something to stop it. I got some toothache drops, and when I finished using 'em, I looked out of the window and I see some one riding by on a horse. I knowed in a minute who it was, 'cause I know Peter Savage's mare, Bess, as well as I know my own critters. I see it was Dan on her, and he had some sort of a package in his pocket. It was quite a big package, too, and he was taking good care of it. Maybe if you was to ask him, he'd tell you."

"I'll bet it was the stolen silver, and he was hidin' it!" exclaimed Constable Walker. "Come on, Jake, we'll arrest him before he can skip out."

"Don't seem very likely Dan Hardy would be a robber," remarked Jacob. "I've knowed him quite a while, an' he's always been honest. His father was a good man, and his mother used to teach in th' Sunday School."

"That isn't saying Dan takes after them," in-

terposed Hank Lee. "I'm not making any charges, understand, but I'm telling you what I saw."

"I don't believe he done it," ventured the doctor's hired man.

"Ye don't know nothin' about it," declared Constable Walker. "I believe he's guilty, an' I'm goin' t' arrest him 'fore he escapes. Ye needn't come unless ye want t', Jake."

But Constable Wolff was not going to let his companion get the glory of the arrest alone, and together they started for the farm to take Dan into custody.

CHAPTER XI

DAN'S ARREST

As soon as Dan had made up his mind what he was going to do,—that is go to the village and tell the constables what he had seen that night,—he hurried with his corn hoeing.

"I think I'll change my clothes before I go," he said to himself. "These aren't fit to go to town in. My others are not much better, but they haven't quite so many holes."

Dan had to wear second-hand clothes, or garments made over from those cast aside by his employer, for Mrs. Savage was determined not to spend any money on the lad.

"I think my best plan will be to get into the house quietly," thought Dan, "for if Mr. Savage sees me he'll not let me go."

He knew a way he could get to his room without being seen by any one in the house. This was to go up through the back orchard, and climb an

old apple tree, one branch of which was opposite the window of his garret room.

Once in his apartment he could change his clothes and leave his room the same way, slipping off to the village. He did not feel it would be wrong to do so, as he had worked considerable over-time of late, and was entitled to a few hours off. Besides, he was doing the doctor a service.

Dan managed to reach his room without attracting any attention from Mrs. Savage, who was doing her baking. Once in his sleeping apartment Dan gathered up his clothes.

"Guess I'll not change here," he said to himself. "It might take too long, and she might come up and find me. I'll make a bundle, and do my changing in the barn."

Accordingly he did up his other suit, shoes and a clean collar in a little package, tied it to his back, and prepared to descend by means of the old apple tree.

"I certainly hope I can put the constables on the right track," he mused. "If I could, and the robbers were arrested, maybe I would get a reward. That would be fine. I'd have some money of my own, then, and perhaps I could get a better place, where I could go to school, or, at least, do some

studying." Which showed that Dan was an ambitious lad, and wanted to rise in life.

Making sure that his bundle would not slip out of the cord, he stepped from his window sill, and out on the big limb. He was about to descend when he heard some one talking, and looking down, he saw four men close to the tree.

The men were the two constables, one of Mr. Savage's hired men and Silas Martin, who had accompanied the officers back to the farm. They had arrived a little while before, and had sought out Mr. Savage to tell him their errand, but learned that the old farmer had gone to a distant meadow, to repair a fence.

"Could I attend to matters fer you?" Mrs. Savage had asked, pausing in the midst of her baking. She hoped the three men would tell her their errand, as she was very curious. She rather suspected it had to do with the robbery, and imagining they were organizing a crowd to hunt down the burglars, wanted her husband to help.

"No, ma'am, we'll explain to Mr. Savage," had been the reply from Constable Wolff, who had taken upon himself the part of spokesman. "Never tell any detective news to a woman," he cautioned his companions a little later. "They can't keep a secret."

The two constables whispered together for a moment, and then announced that they would go to the barn and await the return of Mr. Savage. That was one object they had, and the other was due to a suggestion of Constable Wolff's, that they try to locate the whereabouts of Dan, and prevent him escaping, until they could consult with his employer. The truth was, in spite of what Hank Lee had said, both constables were a little doubtful of Dan's guilt.

When the officers and Silas reached the barn they met one of the hired men. Making a casual inquiry from him, Mr. Wolff learned that the farm-hand had seen Dan leave the cornfield some time before and start for the house.

"Then he's tryin' to escape!" Constable Wolff had declared. "That's his object! Come on, we'll surround the house. I'll appoint you a special deputy," he added to the hired man, "an' you'll be obliged by law to help us."

"Help you do what?"

"Arrest Dan Hardy."

"Arrest Dan Hardy?" What for?"

"We suspect him of the robbery of Dr. Maxwell's house. Mind you, we only suspect him, an' we want to question him. You've got t' help."

"Well, I'll help you, all right, but you needn't

worry. Dan Hardy is as innocent as I am. He isn't going to run away. Come on, I'll take you to his room."

"No, no. We must go cautiously," objected Constable Wolff, his detective abilities asserting themselves. "If we go to th' front of th' house, he may see us, an' get out th' back way. First we'll go t' th' back, an' I'll post you there as a guard. Then Fred, Silas an' me, we'll go in an' get him."

"Suit yourselves," answered the hired man, who was a good friend of Dan's. "He'll not be afraid to answer your questions, and he'll not try to run away."

Now my readers can understand how it was that the four men happened to be under the tree just as Dan was coming down. The two officers and Silas had been led there by the hired man, who offered to point out the window of Dan's room.

"You stay here, keep guard, an' we'll go around front," directed Constable Wolff.

At that instant Dan started to descend to the ground. He made quite a commotion among the leaves, and the men, hearing it, looked up. Constable Walker caught sight of the boy.

"Dan Hardy, we want you!" called Mr. Wolff sternly. "Don't try to hide away from us. We see you!"

"I'm not hiding," replied Dan.

"Then what are you doing up that tree?"

"I'm coming down from my room," for Dan did not want to explain all of his reasons for his actions.

"That's a queer answer," commented the constable. "Where ye goin'?"

"I was just going to see you."

"Humph, that's a likely story! Guess you knowed I was comin' after you."

"No, I did not," replied Dan, "but I was going to tell you about the robbery—at least what I know."

"He's goin' to confess!" whispered Constable Walker. "I guess he knowed I was after him."

"You'd better come down," advised Constable Wolff.

"I'm going to."

As Dan slid to the ground the bundle he had tied to his back slipped from the string. The package struck the hard earth and burst open, revealing his clothes, shoes and clean collar.

"Ha! I knowed it!" cried Jacob Wolff. "We

come jest in time! He was all packed up ready to escape! Dan Hardy, I arrest you in th' name of th' law!" and he grasped the boy by the collar of his coat.

"Arrest me? What for?" and poor Dan became quite alarmed.

"Oh, you know what for, you jest confessed it."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Didn't ye jest say ye was comin' t' tell us about th' robbery?" demanded Mr. Walker.

"Yes, but—"

"Then I arrest ye fer the burglarizin' of Dr. Maxwell's house last night!" cried Constable Walker, also seizing Dan by the coat, determined not to be outdone by his companion.

"Tell 'em you didn't do it, Dan!" exclaimed the hired man. "I know you didn't."

"Thank you," said the boy, touched by these friendly words. "Of course I did not commit the robbery, though I may be able to tell you something about it."

"I guess ye kin; more than's good fer ye," and Constable Walker laughed sarcastically.

"You should warn him that anything he says may be used against him," declared the hired man. "That's the law, and you know it. You have no

right to trap him into saying something that may incriminate him."

"Yes, that's right," admitted Mr. Wolff. "It's my lawful duty," he went on, "to state that anythin' ye say will be used for trial. So ye'd better keep still, 'less you want to tell," he added cunningly.

"I have nothing to conceal," said Dan. " I can easily prove that I was some miles away from here at the time of the robbery. If Mr. Savage was here he would tell you. As I said before, I may know something that will be of service to the authorities. I saw some strange men last night, and their actions puzzled me. I was on my way to tell you, and—"

"Yes, ye was goin' t' tell us, but we find ye hidin' in a tree, with yer clothes all packed up ready t' run away," interposed Constable Walker. "That's a likely yarn! Ye kin tell that t' th' Squire. I believe ye robbed th' house, an' I'm goin' t' search ye."

Things began to look bad for poor Dan. It was easy to see how his actions were misconstrued. Even the simple packing up of some of his clothes made it look as if he was going to run away.

At the mention of the word "search" Dan drew

back indignantly. He was not used to such treatment. Before he could prevent it the constable had thrust his hand into the boy's pocket. As he did so he uttered an exclamation. Then he drew forth a silver spoon. It was the one Dan had picked up in the road, near where he had seen the mysterious men.

"What ye got there?" asked Constable Wolff, who wished he had done the searching.

"A silver spoon," was the answer. "I'll bet it's part of the stolen booty. Yep," he went on, "it's got an 'M' on it, an' M stands fer Maxwell. Now, Dan Hardy, I guess ye can't say ye're innocent! We've found part of th' stolen property on ye. Come along now"

Poor Dan, who had forgotten all about the spoon, felt his heart sink like lead. He was arrested for theft.

CHAPTER XII

TAKEN TO JAIL

EVEN the hired man, good friend as he was to Dan, could not but admit that matters looked black for the boy. Dan had been away all night, and, though those at Mr. Savage's farm knew where he had been sent, they could not give evidence that he had not gone to Dr. Maxwell's house, as well as to the Randall place. Getting on the wrong road, and being delayed, had operated against Dan.

"Have you got to take me with you?" he asked of the constables.

"'Course we're goin' t' take ye with us," replied Mr. Walker. "Think we're goin' t' all this trouble catchin' a robber, an' then let him go? Not much!"

"But where is Mr. Savage? He can prove that I was gone all night, taking a bottle of medicine to his sister."

"He's not here now, an' no matter what he said,

we'd have t' take ye, after all th' evidence we've discovered," replied Constable Wolff.

"You had better say nothing more, Dan," advised the hired man. "Go with the constables. I will tell Mr. Savage what has happened, as soon as he comes back, and I think he will testify in your favor. I'll come to the village as soon as I can."

"You'll find him in th' jail," called Mr. Wolff, as he moved away, with his hands tightly clenched in Dan's collar.

"In jail! Oh, you're not going to put me in jail, are you?" pleaded the unfortunate boy.

"'Course we are. That's where all prisoners has t' go, an' ye ain't any better than any one else."

"I know that," admitted Dan, trying hard not to let the hot tears come into his eyes, "but I am innocent of this charge."

"Then ye can tell th' Squire so, an' he'll let ye go," spoke Mr. Walker.

"What's the matter?" asked Mrs. Savage, who, unable to restrain her curiosity any longer, had come out to see where the constables were. "What has Dan done?"

"He's arrested fer robbin' Dr. Maxwell's house," declared Constable Walker.

"For robbery! Oh, I allers knowed he'd come

t' some bad end," and the woman shook her head, as if this was what she had always expected.

"Do you believe I did it, Mrs. Savage?" asked Dan.

"I ain't got nothin' to say," replied the woman. "I don't know nothin' about law business. I'm not goin' t' be a witness in th' police court."

"I don't believe ye done it, Dan," put in Silas Martin, who had been too astonished at the sudden turn of events to say anything up to this time. "Them was professional burglars what done th' job. I'll tell Dr. Maxwell, and he'll come t' see ye."

"Thank you, Silas," said Dan.

"Huh! I s'pose ye think, 'cause ye discovered it, that ye know all about th' robbery," sneered Mr. Wolff. "Let me tell ye it takes a detective t' decide whether a job was done by professional robbers or not. I'll take a look at th' house soon as I've got my prisoner safe behind th' bars."

"Are you—are you going t' lock me up?" asked Dan, his heart fluttering in fear and shame.

"Of course. I'm not goin' t' take any chances on ye're escapin,' like ye most done. I've got ye, an' I'm goin' t' keep ye," and Constable Walker, who made this heartless speech, nodded his head vigorously, in which he was imitated by his companion.

"I thought maybe you could let me stay in the town hall without locking me up," went on Dan. "Mr. Savage will surely be able to prove that I was far away when this robbery occurred. Until then, why need you lock me up? It will only be a little while."

"We ain't takin' no chances," declared Constable Wolff. "Come on now," and he started to lead Dan away.

"You'd better go in a wagon," interposed the hired man. "I'll hitch up for you."

"That's a good idea," declared Mr. Wolff. "He might escape if we walked with him."

"Ef ye take one of our hosses or wagons ye'll have t' pay fer it," warned Mrs. Savage.

"We will," replied Mr. Walker. "Ye kin send yer bill t' th' county. They allow th' use of a rig in bringin' prisoners from a distance."

Hanging his head in shame at the disgrace that had come to him, just at the time when he thought he was serving the ends of justice, poor Dan got into the wagon between his captors, the hot tears coming into his eyes.

"I'll come to you, or send Mr. Savage as soon as he gets back," promised the hired man, but Dan felt that he would receive little consolation from

his mean employer, though the farmer could not refuse to testify in his favor.

"And I'll tell Dr. Maxwell," added Silas Martin, as he rode back to the house that had been robbed.

There was great excitement in the village when the two constables drove in, with Dan seated between them. The news of the robbery had spread like wildfire, and, to the eager inquiries that were met with on every side, the two officials told of Dan's arrest.

"There he is! There's the robber!" he could hear persons in the crowd exclaim. Most of the villagers knew him, and curious as it may seem, there were few who did not believe him guilty, though they had always up to this time, been certain he was an honest boy. Very often, when a man or a boy is in misfortune, many take pleasure in adding to it by harsh words.

The crowd increased as word of Dan's arrest spread. At first he hung his head, and pulled his cap down over his eyes, but, though he was much ashamed of his plight, he knew he was innocent, and he determined to hold up his head and look every one in the face.

Even this action was not regarded rightly by most of the curious ones.

"Oh, see how bold he is!" exclaimed a gossiping woman, whom Mrs. Hardy in her life time, had often befriended. "He brazens it right out. But them Hardy folks was always uppish, and considered themselves too good to associate with common folks. I wonder what Dan's relations would say, if they saw him now."

"I don't believe he has any," replied another woman. "He is all alone in the world."

At length the wagon came to a stop in front of the town hall, part of which was finished off into two cells, that made up the jail of Hayden. There were not often prisoners in the cells, as crime was rather infrequent in the village.

In spite of the shame and disgrace of it, Dan was rather glad to be taken into the building, as he hoped to escape the curious throng, many persons in which were making unkind remarks about him.

But in this he was doomed to disappointment. Quite a crowd followed the constables, for an arrest was a novelty in Hayden, especially one involving a village character, and on such a serious charge as this.

"Now then, you people have all got t' git back!" ordered Constable Wolff.

"Guess this is a public place, and we've got a right here," said some one.

"Wa'al, maybe ye have, at th' trial. But ye can't come in th' jail, 'less ye want t' be locked up, in which case we can oblige ye," and the officer grinned at his joke.

Though the crowd tried to follow, to see Dan locked in a cell, the constables drove them back, and fastened the door leading to the jail part of the building. Dan shuddered when he saw before him two cages, made of steel bars.

"Do I have to go in there?" he asked hopelessly.

"Yes, ye do!" snapped Constable Wolff. In fact he was just a little bit ashamed to be locking up a boy, but he did not want to give in before his official companion, and, probably Constable Walker felt the same way. If both of them had been a little kinder, and not so insistent on doing their duty to the very limit, Dan could have remained in an outer room.

As it was they thrust him into a cell, clanged the heavy door shut, and locked it.

Dan sank on the cot bed in the steel-barred cage. The footsteps of the constables echoed away down the hall, and the boy was left alone in the jail.

CHAPTER XIII

BEFORE THE SQUIRE

TIMOTHY PERKFELL was a justice of the peace in Hayden. He was called Squire by nearly every one. The title meant a good deal to Mr. Perkfell, and he would have felt insulted had any one omitted it when speaking to him. That is unless he was called "Judge," which he liked better than "Squire."

The Squire's office was in a small room back of Hank Lee's grocery store, and could be entered from there. It was a good sized room, for occasionally, trials for minor offences were held there. There were a number of chairs, a big stove, a picture of General Washington and another of the Governor on the wall. The Squire usually sat at a big desk, behind a row of law books.

It needed but a glance to tell that the volumes were law books, because they looked so uninteresting. They were bound in leather, and, on the backs, were such titles as "Hampersmith on Con-

tracts," "Vroom XLIV," "Corbin's Forms," etc. The books were always very dusty, which would seem to indicate that they were seldom used, and this was the case, for Squire Perkfell knew very little about law, and certainly not enough to understand the contents of the big books.

Still it made a good impression to have them on his desk, and whenever he was in doubt how to decide a case he would take up one of the volumes, dust it carefully, pretend to hunt through it for a decision, and then say something like this:

"Ahem! I have listened to the learned counsel on both sides, and, on consulting Blackstone in the celebrated case of Nottingham versus Snagdeck, I find that there is very much similar in this action. Blackstone expressed my ideas fully. I therefore find—" and he would announce his decision.

The Squire was rather an elderly man, with white hair, a white beard, somewhat stained by tobacco juice, and he had a glass eye. Perhaps that is why he did not oftener read his law books. He was quite dignified, or, at least, he used to think he was, which amounts to almost the same thing.

It was before this man that poor Dan was to be given a preliminary hearing, on the charge of being a burglar. As the Squire had no authority to

sit as a magistrate he could not finally dispose of the case. The two constables hurried to the office and found him sitting at his desk.

"Good mornin', Squire," greeted Mr. Walker.

"Ah, good morning, my good man," replied the Squire in rather chilling tones.

"How-d' do, Judge Perkfell," greeted Constable Wolff, who saw the somewhat cold welcome his companion received.

"Ah, officer, good morning. It's a fine day," returned Judge Perkfell, pleased at having his title conferred on him thus early. "What can I do for you? Do you wish a warrant, or a subpoena?"

"Neither, thanks," replied Mr. Wolff, rubbing his hands at this indication of being on good terms with the Squire. Mr. Walker felt a little hurt, and resolved, after this, to always address the justice as "Judge."

"Perhaps then, you want me to draw up a deed, or a mortgage or some legal paper."

"No, Judge, but we would like you to hold court."

"Hold court? Why, you don't mean to tell me there is a prisoner in Hayden? I did not hear of it."

The Judge, who had only a little while before

entered his office, had not seen the commotion when Dan was brought through the town.

"Yes, sir—I mean Judge," went on Constable Wolff. "I've got a desperate prisoner in the jail."

"You mean we've got him," interrupted Constable Walker. "I helped catch him jest th' same as you."

"So ye did, but I discovered the clues."

"Never mind, officers," spoke the Judge sharply, as he did not think it dignified to have a dispute in his office. "Who is the prisoner?"

"A burglar!" exclaimed Constable Wolff.

"Dan Hardy!" answered Constable Walker in the same breath.

"You don't mean to tell me Dan Hardy has been arrested as a burglar?" said the justice, as much surprised as he thought it consistent with his dignity to be.

"Yep, Squire—I mean Your Honor," answered Mr. Wolff. I catched—I mean we catched him this mornin'. He robbed Dr. Maxwell's house last night, an' we discovered part of th' evidence on him," and he showed the spoon he had found in Dan's pocket. "Now we want you, if you will, t' hold court, an' properly commit him t' jail, until th' Grand Jury can sit on his case."

"Wait a minute!" exclaimed the Squire. "I am the person to judge what is to be done in this case, not the officer who makes the arrest. It may be that I will find it unnecessary to commit him for the action of the Grand Inquest. I shall judge of that when I hear the evidence."

"But he's guilty, Mr. Perk—I mean Judge," said Mr. Walker quickly.

"Silence!" cried the Squire, offended at the slip Mr. Walker had made. "I am the proper person to decide that. You may bring the prisoner before me in half an hour. Meanwhile I will look up certain points of law, and I do not wish to be disturbed. Now clear the court," and the justice spoke as if there was a crowd of persons before him.

The truth was he wanted to be alone, to look up some authority in the matter and see if he had a right to hold court in the case of a burglar. He had never done so before.

It did not take Squire Perkfell long to determine that he had authority to act in the case of a person charged with robbery, and then he waited for the officers to bring Dan in.

Meanwhile the two constables went to the jail, and got their prisoner.

"What are you going to do with me now?" asked Dan, curiously.

"Ye're goin' t' be tried," said Mr. Wolff.

"Will Mr. Savage be there? I think I have a right to have his testimony," declared Dan, who, from having read of trials knew a little about law.

"I s'pose he'll be there," replied Jacob Wolff. "Mebby ye won't be so glad t' see him, after he tells what he knows. Hank Lee is goin' t' testify too."

"What does he know about me?"

"Better wait, an' see."

"I am entitled to some rights in this matter," went on Dan. "I should be represented by a lawyer."

"There ain't none in town now," said Mr. Walker. "John Burge has gone t' Canestota, and Ed Lancing is over t' his mother's. But Judge Perkfell will know what t' do."

"I am entitled to a representative in court," insisted Dan, "and if I can't have a lawyer I wish you would send for Mr. Harrison."

"What, that blacksmith? He don't know no law," objected Jacob Wolff.

"Maybe not, but he is my friend, and he told

me to let him know when I was in trouble, and I'm in trouble now."

"Wa'al, I'll tell him," said Mr. Walker, not very kindly, for he did not want to lose anything of what was to take place. "I'll tell him t' come t' Squire Perkfell's court. Jake, d' ye think ye kin manage him?" and he nodded at Dan.

"Oh, don't be afraid, I'm not going to escape," said the boy, understanding what was meant.

"I guess ye'd better not," spoke Mr. Wolff fiercely taking a better grip on Dan's coat sleeve.

While one constable went, rather reluctantly, to summon the veteran blacksmith, the other led Dan toward Hank Lee's store, a crowd of persons gathering as soon as they emerged from the town hall.

"Where are we going?" asked Dan.

"Through th' store, t' th' Judge's office," replied Mr. Wolff. "Th' Judge, he's lookin' up th' law, an' he don't want t' be disturbed fer half an hour. We'll wait in Hank's store."

"I had rather wait in jail," spoke Dan, who felt he would be subjected to ridicule and abuse in the grocery, with its crowd of men and boys.

"Mebby so, but ye can't do as ye like when ye're under arrest."

He led the boy into the store. Though it was quite early there was a big throng in it, for the rumor had spread that Dan was to have a preliminary hearing, and all wanted to be present. They knew they could go through the store into the Squire's office.

"Clear th' way fer th' representative of th' law!" exclaimed Jacob Wolff, as he led Dan in.

"Jake's in his glory now," said one man.

"That's right," added another. "He'd rather be where he is than President of th' United States, I guess."

Dan was led to a chair, near the door which opened into the Squire's office. The half hour was not quite up, and Mr. Wolff knew better than to go in before it was time.

"So you got him, did you?" asked Hank Lee, coming over and standing before the constable and his prisoner. "I always knowed he was bad. He played a mean trick on me one day, and I reckon I've got even with him now. I'll get some reward, won't I, for telling you he was the robber?"

"Mebby so," answered Mr. Wolff. He would have preferred Mr. Lee should say nothing about his information, as, if he did, it might take away from the glory coming to the two officers.

"Did you give the constables information that led to my false arrest?" asked Dan indignantly, of Hank Lee.

"Yes, I did, and I'm glad they got you. Now I'm even with you for setting that bull after me. I told you I'd fix you."

"I didn't set the bull after you, Mr. Lee, and it wasn't my fault that you were frightened by it."

"I wasn't frightened, I tell you! I jest ran because I was afraid he might hit me, and knock the money out of my pocket. I got up in the tree so's I could count it and see if it was right."

At this version of the story, so different from the truth Dan could not help smiling. It was evident that Mr. Lee had told no one exactly what had happened, or how he had begged Dan not to desert him, to go for help.

"Oh, you're laughing now," sneered the storekeeper, as he saw the smile on Dan's face, "but you'll be sorry enough when you're behind the bars. I always knowed you'd come to no good end. It runs in the family."

"See here!" exclaimed Dan, springing to his feet. "You can insult me, if you will, because you are bigger and stronger than I am, but you shan't insult the memory of my father and mother! I

come of as good family as you do, and you know it. You gave false information about me, because you have a grudge against me. I don't know what it was, but it wasn't true, and I'll prove it."

Dan's righteous anger seemed to get the best of him, and he struggled to get loose from the restraining hold of Constable Wolff. He had no idea what he wanted to do, except he felt as if he would like to strike the mean storekeeper.

"Here! Hold on!" cried the officer, roughly dragging Dan back. "None of that! You're a prisoner!"

"Yes, you're a felon!" added Mr. Lee with a sneer.

"I'd rather be an innocent prisoner than a coward!" cried Dan, remembering how the storekeeper whined when the bull had him up a tree.

"Who's a coward?"

"You are. You were afraid to stay up the tree alone when I wanted to go after help to catch the bull."

"What's that?" asked Sam Porter, one of the men in the store. "I didn't hear the story that way. Tell us about it, Dan."

Hardly knowing why he did so, Dan related the story, showing the cowardice of the storekeeper.

"Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho!" laughed Sam. "That's a good one on you, Lee. Treed by a bull, and dasn't stick your foot down! Ha! Ho! That's prutty good!"

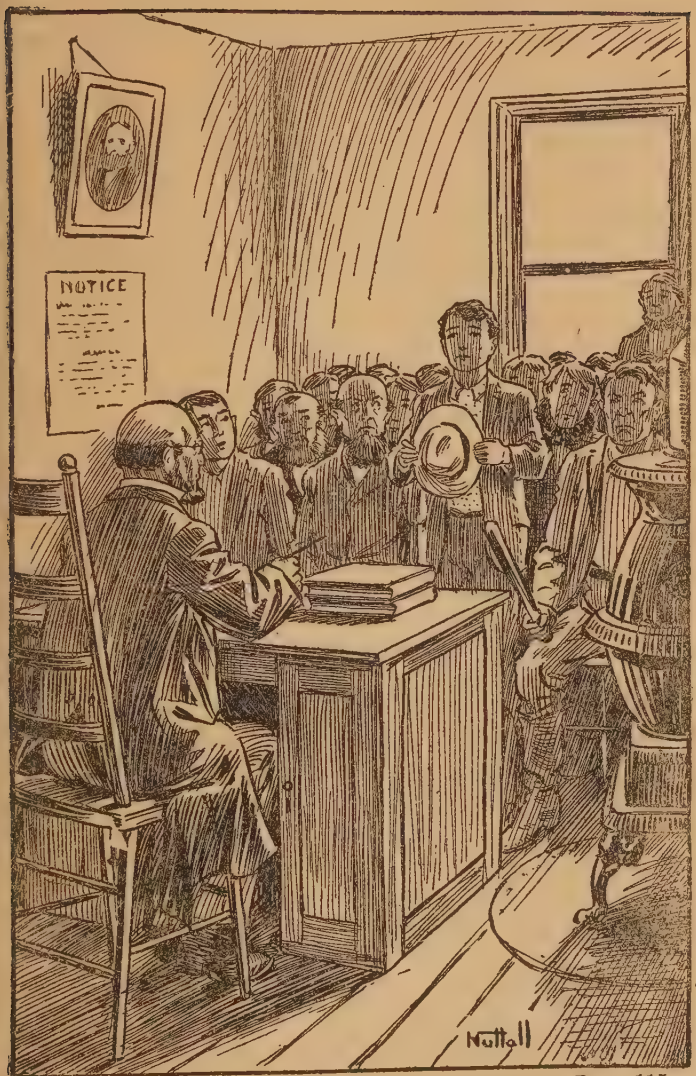
The rest of the crowd joined in the laugh at the discomfited Mr. Lee, who angrily retired to his private office to make out bills. Dan had gotten the best of him, and, somehow the sympathy of the crowd, which had been rather against the boy, now turned his way.

Suddenly the door leading to the office of the Squire opened, and Mr. Perkfell announced:

"Let the prisoner enter. I will now hold court."

There was a scramble on the part of the crowd to get good seats, and Constable Wolff led Dan in. As the boy was arraigned before the Squire, Constable Walker came in, followed by Mr. Harrison. Dan's heart leaped, and his courage came back as he saw his sturdy friend, the village blacksmith.

"We will now proceed with the hearing," announced the justice. "Order in the court!"



"LET THE PRISONER STAND UP," SAID THE JUSTICE.—*Page* 115.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TRIAL

SEVERAL minutes passed before the crowd settled down. There was not room for all to sit, and many stood up in the back part of the room.

The two constables, placing Dan between them, took seats near the Squire's desk. Judge Perkfell put on his glasses and selected a book from the pile in front of him. He took the first one he came to, and opened it at random. This was only done to impress the onlookers.

"Ahem! Let the prisoner stand up," called the justice.

Dan arose.

"Ahem! That will do, be seated."

Dan did not see what that amounted to. Neither did any one else but the Squire. To him it showed the power he had to make prisoners do whatever he commanded.

"Where is the complainant in this case?" went on the justice.

No one answered.

"Is the complainant not present? Unless he answers at once I shall commit him for contempt of court."

"I don't think there is any com—complainant, Judge," spoke Mr. Wolff, wondering what the word meant.

"What? No complainant? Why there must be, or we can not hold court."

"Can't I get you one, your Honor?" asked Mr. Walker, determined to make up for past offenses. "If you tell me where it is I'll bring it."

"The complainant is the person who makes the complaint—who brings the charge—who accuses the prisoner," explained the justice, frowning, as he saw some persons smiling.

"Oh, I'm makin' th' charge," replied Constable Wolff.

"So am I!" exclaimed his fellow officer quickly, for he was not going to be left out of the affair.

"You are both complainants? Why, I understood it was Dr. Maxwell's house that was burglarized."

"So it was," said Mr. Walker quickly.

"Then Dr. Maxwell is the complainant. Is he present?"

"He has got to see a sick lady," explained Silas Martin, the doctor's hired man, as he stood up in the back of the room, blushing very much at the notice he attracted.

"Ah, in that case we will proceed without him, and we can have his evidence later. A doctor is privileged to stay away from court, to attend the sick, as laid down in the Atlantic Reporter, 638, Barker *versus* Sanderson, but for no other cause. Otherwise I should have had to commit Dr. Maxwell for contempt of court."

There was a sort of gasp at this, as the Squire intended there should be, for, as he thought, it showed his power.

"Meanwhile we will proceed with the case. I will hear the evidence of the two representatives of the law."

The constables straightened up in their chairs at thus hearing themselves mentioned.

At that moment Mr. Harrison, the blacksmith, went over and took a seat beside Dan.

"Here!" exclaimed the Judge. "What are you doing? You have no right there."

"I am here to look after the interest of the prisoner, Dan Hardy," said Mr. Harrison firmly.

"But you're not a lawyer. You're only a blacksmith."

"I know it, Squire Perkfell, but one does not need to be a lawyer to represent a person in the court of a justice of the peace. Your law books will tell you that."

Perhaps they would, but the Squire did not know where to look for the information. He was half inclined to dispute the word of the blacksmith, but he thought better of it.

Perhaps Mr. Harrison was right, and he was entitled to represent Dan. The Squire knew enough of law to realize that a prisoner ought to be represented by some one. He thought it ought to be a lawyer, but if the blacksmith insisted, perhaps it would not be wise to disagree with him.

"Very well," announced the Justice, after a moment's thought, "I will allow you to represent the prisoner,—temporarily, however, only temporarily. I may change my decision later, as the case develops."

Mr. Harrison smiled.

"I now demand the right to have a few minutes private conversation with my—my client," said the blacksmith.

Squire Perkfell did not know what to do. This was something new in his practice.

"Don't do it!" exclaimed Constable Wolff. "Don't allow it, your Honor. It's a plot t' let him escape!"

"Silence!" cried the Squire. "I am in charge of this court!"

He dimly remembered once being at a trial where a lawyer made such a demand, and the judge granted it. Squire Perkfell prided himself on knowing law, and he wanted to do what was right, so he said:

"Very well, your request is granted. But you must talk to the prisoner in this room. You may withdraw to a corner."

"That will do," assented Mr. Harrison, and he led Dan to a part of the room where he could converse with him quietly. The two constables watched him narrowly. Dan told his friend all the events of the night ride, including the finding of the spoon, and the actions of the mysterious men. Then he led the boy back to his seat, and spoke to the Squire.

"We are ready to proceed," he said.

"Who is the first witness?" asked the justice,

who, in the meanwhile, had been asking Constable Wolff more about the case.

"Si Martin," answered Jacob Wolff, who had assumed the role of prosecutor. "He discovered the robbery."

"Silas Martin, step forward," called the Squire, and the doctor's hired man, blushing like a girl, shambled to the desk.

"Now tell the Court what you know."

"I don't know nothin' about it. I didn't see Dan steal anythin'. I don't believe he done it. Neither does Dr. Maxwell, an' he told me t' say so. He's comin' here as soon as he can."

"The court can not await the convenience of any one," said the justice with dignity. "Nor does it want you to express your opinion as to the guilt or innocence of a prisoner. Just tell what you know of the robbery."

Thereupon Silas related what we already know, of how he discovered that the house had been entered, and the silver and other things taken. Next he told of his visit to the constables, and what Mr. Lee had said regarding Dan's midnight ride.

The storekeeper was called and gave his evidence. It began to look black for Dan, especially when the constables added their story of him being

up the tree, and of the finding of the spoon in his pocket.

"That seems to be the case for the prosecution," remarked the Squire. "Is the defense ready to proceed?" And he looked at Mr. Harrison.

"We are," replied the blacksmith. "I want to ask some questions of the witnesses. I did not interrupt them while they were testifying, as I wanted to hear the whole story. First I would like to call Mr. Lee back to the stand."

"I ain't got no time to bother with this case any more," replied the storekeeper. "I told all I know. I've got to go back and wait on some customers."

"Take the stand!" exclaimed the justice. "You are a material witness in this case, and, until you are excused by the court, you must remain. I will commit you for contempt if you go away."

Mr. Lee scowled. He was angry at the justice, and he privately resolved to raise his rent as soon as the case was over, for he owned the office where the Squire held court.

CHAPTER XV

HELD IN BAIL

THE blacksmith, who had made several notes when Dan told him the story, looked at the paper in his hand. He had often seen court-martial trials in the army and knew how to proceed.

"Mr. Lee," he said, "you have testified to seeing the defendant, some time early this morning, riding on a horse, and carrying a bundle. Is that correct?"

"I seen Dan Hardy, if that's who you mean."

"Yes, he is the defendant in this case. Now will you state to the court just how large this bundle was?"

"Wa'al, it wasn't very big."

"As big as a bushel basket?"

"No, of course not. He had it in his pocket, and I'd like to see any one carry a bushel basket there and ride a horse."

"Well, how big was it?"

"How do I know?"

"You said you saw it, and have so testified under oath."

Mr. Lee squirmed in his seat.

"Wa'al," he said at length, "I didn't see it very plain. It was dark at the time."

"Yet you have stated to the court under oath that you saw Dan Hardy very plainly when you got up to get something to stop your toothache. You have testified that you saw him have a bundle. Now I want you to state to the court the size of that bundle."

The room was very still now. Clearly something was coming, and the crowd did not want to miss it.

"Wa'al, I guess it was about as big as a quart measure," said Mr. Lee at length.

"You swear to that?"

"I s'pose so."

"That will do."

There was a murmur of surprise at the sudden ending of the storekeeper's testimony.

"Is that all?" asked Mr. Lee, apparently much relieved.

"Yes. Call Silas Martin."

The hired man, still blushing, returned to the witness stand.

"Silas," began the blacksmith in a kindly tone, "can you swear as to how much stuff was taken away from Dr. Maxwell's house?"

"Pretty near, Mr. Harrison."

"What was it?"

"Wa'al, there was a lot of spoons, forks, knives, a big silver water pitcher, a silver sugar bowl, a silver coffee pot, a silver coffee urn and—"

"In fact there was quite a bulky lot of stuff, was there not?"

"Yes, sir."

"About how large a bundle would it make?"

Once more the crowd gave a sort of gasp. They began to see to what end Mr. Harrison was asking questions.

"Wa'al, I used t' clean th' pitchers, urns an' sugar bowl once a week," testified Silas, "an' I used t' put 'em all in a basket t' carry 'em out t' th' harness room t' polish 'em."

"How big a basket did you put them in, Silas?"

"Wa'al, by careful managin' I could git th' water pitcher, th' milk pitcher, th' sugar bowl, th' coffee pot an' th' tea pot in a bushel basket."

"Was there room for anything more?"

"Not a bit."

"Then the things stolen from Dr. Maxwell's

house would more than fill a bushel basket?"

"They'd pretty near fill two."

"That is all, Silas."

"Ye don't want me no more?"

"No, I do not, but perhaps some of these other gentlemen might like to question you," and Mr. Harrison motioned to the two constables.

"No, I don't want to," said Mr. Wolff, and Mr. Walker also indicated that he desired to take no part in the matter.

"Then I think you may go, Silas," said Mr. Harrison.

"Before I go I want t' say I don't believe Dan Hardy robbed th' house!" exclaimed Silas.

"Silence!" cried the justice, who, for the last few minutes had felt that he was being ignored. "If you say that again I shall commit you for contempt of court."

"Wa'al, I said it all I want t'," murmured Silas, as he went back to his place in the rear of the room.

"Squire Perkfell," began the blacksmith, "I think I have brought out enough evidence to prove that Dan had no part in this robbery. Mr. Lee has testified that the bundle Dan had was the size of a quart measure. The doctor's hired man, who

is in a position to know, swears that the booty taken from the house would more than fill a bushel basket. I therefore submit that the bundle Dan had was not stolen property, and I shall prove it."

Mr. Savage was next called, and, though he was rather an unwilling witness in behalf of Dan, he told of sending the lad to Mrs. Randall's house with the medicine, which was brought back. He thus accounted for Dan's night trip, and for the package the boy carried.

"Dan Hardy, take the stand," called Mr. Harrison, and Dan, with firm tread, and head held erect, walked forward to give his evidence. He told of his night ride, and of seeing the mysterious men, also of his intention to slip to the village and inform the constables without bothering to tell Mr. Savage.

"What about th' spoon we found in his pocket?" asked Constable Wolff triumphantly.

"Explain that, Dan," said Mr. Harrison, and Dan did so, telling how he had found the article.

There was a murmur in the court room at this. It was plain that many persons, if they did not believe Dan guilty, did think he was in league with the robbers. There were sneering whispers.

"In view of what had been testified, and from the lack of any positive evidence that my client was involved in this robbery, I respectfully ask his discharge," said Mr. Harrison.

"Don't let him go free! He's guilty!" exclaimed Constable Walker, who hated to see his prisoner set at liberty.

"Silence!" cried the justice. "I shall commit you for contempt."

He glared around in a menacing manner.

"Ahem!" he went on portentously. "I have carefully listened to all the evidence in this case. The prisoner seems able to prove a fairly good alibi—"

"What's that, I wonder," whispered Constable Walker to Constable Wolff.

"Sh! That means he was somewhere else when he done th' crime."

"But how could he be somewhere's else?—"

"Silence!" cried the justice, glaring at the two officers. Then he went on:

"In spite of the seeming alibi, and the testimony about the size of the bundle he had, the discovery of the spoon in his pocket is very damaging. I shall express no opinion in the matter, but I feel obliged

to hold the prisoner in one thousand dollars bail to await the action of the Grand Jury.

"If he can not furnish the bail, or a satisfactory bondsman, who owns property worth at least twice the amount of the bail, I shall have to commit the prisoner to jail. Court is adjourned."

CHAPTER XVI

A FRIEND IN NEED

DAN was bitterly disappointed. He thought when Mr. Harrison had brought out the evidence so clearly, and when it was testified that he was far away from the scene of the robbery, that the justice would give a verdict of "not guilty."

"What does it mean?" asked the boy, much bewildered.

"It means ye'll have t' go back t' jail, that's what it means," declared Constable Walker vindictively.

"Yes, an' stay there 'till yer regular trial at th' county court house," added Constable Wolff.

"That is unless you can get some one to go on your bond for a thousand dollars," explained Justice Perkfell, not so gruffly as he had spoken before. He was well satisfied with himself, and the way he had conducted the case.

"You mean if I can get some one to sign a paper I can go free until my regular trial?"

"That's it, but whoever signs the paper must be worth at least two thousand dollars. He would be security for your appearance to be tried, that is if the Grand Jury finds an indictment against you. If you should run away in the meanwhile, whoever went on your bond would have to pay a thousand dollars."

Dan naturally thought of his employer, who was quite wealthy. Certainly he was worth two thousand dollars.

"Will you go bail for me?" asked the boy, turning to Mr. Savage.

"What's that?" inquired the farmer, as if he had not heard aright.

"Will you be my bondsman?"

"Your bondsman? Go yer bail fer a thousand dollars? Wa'al, I guess not much, Dan Hardy! You must think I've got money t' throw away," cried the miserly farmer.

"But it would not cost you anything. All you would have to do would be to sign the paper."

"Yes, an' ef ye took a notion t' skip out between now an' th' time of yer trial, I'd have t' pay th' thousand dollars."

"But I promise I'll not 'skip out' as you call it, Mr. Savage."

"Wa'al, I ain't takin' th' word of a thief!"

"Do you think I'm a thief?" asked Dan indignantly.

"Ain't ye jest been found guilty?"

"No, he has not!" exclaimed Mr. Harrison. "Only a jury of twelve men has a right to say whether or not he is guilty. He is only held for trial."

"Wa'al, I ain't goin' t' risk no thousand dollars on him."

"Then you'll not go on my bond?" queried Dan.

"Not much I won't!"

Poor Dan was down-hearted again. He counted on being allowed his freedom, for he had resolved to do his best to trace the real robbers, and so clear his good name.

"Wa'al, I guess ye'd better come along t' jail now," said Constable Wolff. "There ain't nobody goin' yer bail. Come on," and he caught Dan by the coat sleeve to lead him away.

"Stop!" cried Mr. Harrison in a ringing voice.

"What fer?" demanded the constable.

"Dan needn't stay in jail until his trial comes off."

"I'd like t' know why? Ain't nobody goin' his bail."

"I am!"

"You are?" and the constable sneered. "I'd like t' know where ye got two thousand dollars t' go on anybody's bail. Ye ain't worth more'n two hundred dollars."

"I must require good security," hastily interposed Justice Perkfell. "Very good security."

"And I can furnish it!" exclaimed the veteran, standing close beside Dan, as though he would protect the boy. "I will go on this boy's bond for a thousand—yes, for ten thousand dollars, for I know he is innocent!"

"Talk's cheap, but it takes money t' go on bail bonds," came from Constable Walker. "Everybody knows ye ain't got no ten thousand dollars, Mr. Harrison."

"Then everybody is mistaken," replied the sturdy old blacksmith with a smile. "I was not worth ten thousand dollars a few days ago, but I am now. Justice Perkfell, I'll ask you to look at those papers," and he handed the Squire a bundle of documents.

The old justice adjusted his glasses and began to examine the documents, while the crowd waited impatiently.

"Does that show whether I can qualify in the sum of two thousand dollars and go on Dan's bond?" asked the veteran.

"Ahem! I—er—must admit it does," replied the Squire. "I must, under the law accept you as bondsman for the prisoner, if you desire to take that responsibility."

"I certainly do."

"I may add, for the information of those present," went on the justice, who was not going to miss a chance to make a speech, "that the papers I have examined show that Mr. Harrison has been left considerable property, including some real estate, which is necessary for a bondsman to have. This property, it appears, comes from a distant relative, and I should say, from the statement of the lawyers, that it was worth at least ten thousand dollars."

"Fully that," replied the blacksmith quietly. "It was an unexpected legacy for me, and I never was more surprised in my life than when I got it. It came from a distant cousin, all of whose relatives, save myself, had died. I am glad it came when it did, for it enables me to do my friend Dan a service."

The bond was soon made out and the blacksmith signed it.

"Now, Dan," he said, "you are at liberty. I hope you'll not run away, since I have gone on your bond."

"Indeed I will not, Mr. Harrison. I'm going to stay right around here, and see if I can't discover the burglars. May I go now?" he asked of the justice.

"Yes. You are now under bail for the Grand Jury's action. They may indict you, and they may not."

"Then he ain't got t' go t' jail?" asked Peter Savage, and he seemed a little disappointed.

"No," replied Squire Perkfell.

"Then ye'd better come back t' th' farm with me, Dan," exclaimed his employer. "Ye've lost enough time as 'tis. It's past dinner time, an' there's lots of chores t' be done. Come along, step lively!"

Dan made a sudden resolution.

"Mr. Savage, I'm not going back to the farm with you!" he said.

"What's that?"

"I say I'm not going back to the farm. I'm done working for you. Besides, I don't see why

you should want in your house a boy whom you consider a thief. I'm done with you forever!"

If a bomb had been exploded under the feet of Mr. Peter Savage, he could not have been more surprised.

CHAPTER XVII

A NEW HOME

"Look a-here, Dan Hardy!" sputtered Mr. Savage, "don't ye talk that way t' me. I say ye're goin' back t' th' farm, an' back ye shall go. Th' idea! After all I done fer ye, now ye're out on bail, an' ye won't come an' work fer me."

"Why didn't you offer to go his bond, if you are so anxious to have him come and work for you?" asked Mr. Harrison.

"Wa'al, I—er—that is I was—What's that your business, anyhow?" burst out Mr. Savage, for the question confused him. "I say he's comin' back with me. Come here, young man, step lively."

"I'm not going with you, Mr. Savage," answered Dan firmly.

"I say ye be! Squire, make him come. I've got a claim on him."

"What sort of a claim?" inquired the blacksmith.

"Wa'al, its a good claim."

"Are you his guardian, legally appointed by the court?"

"No, I ain't his guardian, but I've got a claim on him."

"Have you legally adopted him?"

"Course not. Think I'd adopt sech a lazy boy?"

"It's rather strange that you should be so insistent on having a 'lazy' boy, as you call him, work for you. But can you produce any papers, showing that you have a legal claim on him?"

"I ain't got no papers, an' I don't want none. I've got a claim on him, an' I'm goin' t' have him. Didn't I save him from goin' t' th' poorhouse, an' ain't I fed an' clothed him since?"

"If you have, he has more than earned what he got. Dan," went on the aged veteran, "you need not go back to the farm unless you want to. Squire Perkfell will tell you that Mr. Savage has no legal claim on you."

"I guess that's right," ventured the Justice though he rather disliked to side with the boy who had been a prisoner before him.

"All right then!" exclaimed the angry farmer, "go t' th' poorhouse! That's th' place fer ye!

But mind ye, don't ye come around me, askin' t' be took back. I'll never let ye set foot in my place ag'in. Now who's goin' t' look after ye?"

"I am!" exclaimed Mr. Harrison. "Dan shall come and live with me. I have enough for both of us."

"Humph!" sneered Mr. Savage. "He'll make a fine blacksmith."

"I intend giving up the blacksmithing business," said the old soldier. "Fortunately this legacy of ten thousand dollars makes me independent. But I do not intend to be idle. I am going into business, and Dan can help. Come, Dan."

There were more murmurs of surprise from the crowd in the courtroom. So many surprises had never before occurred in one day. There was enough to talk about for a month.

"Good riddance t' ye!" exclaimed Peter Savage, giving Dan an ugly look.

The boy stepped forward.

"I have a case of books at your house, Mr. Savage," he said. "I want to get them. May I?"

"No, ye can't have 'em!"

"But they are mine. They were given to me by my father, and I want them."

"Wa'al, ye can't have 'em."

"What right have you to retain books belonging to Dan?" asked the blacksmith.

"I'll keep 'em t' make up fer all th' trouble he made me. I may have t' pay damages fer what th' bull done, an' it was his fault."

"It was not!" exclaimed Dan.

"Hush! Never mind," advised Mr. Harrison. "Don't dispute with him now, Dan," he added in a whisper. "I'll find a way to get the books."

Mr. Savage left the courtroom, with a leer on his hard looking face. He felt that he had the best of Dan, though he was somewhat put out that the boy was not coming back with him. It meant that the old farmer would have to do more work himself, and he knew his wife would miss Dan around the house.

"I can't thank you enough for all you did for me, Mr. Harrison," said the boy, as he and his friend went out of the Justice's room, part of the crowd following them.

"Then don't try, Dan. I only did my duty by you. I am glad I had the opportunity of going on your bond. I could not have done it a week ago."

"And have you really fallen heir to ten thousand dollars?"

"Yes, strange as it may seem, I have. I was

the most surprised man in the world when the lawyer sent me the papers, and the deeds to the property, which is located in the northern part of this township."

"I'm afraid you have undertaken too big a contract, to take me home with you," went on Dan. "I don't want to be a bother to you."

"Never fear, you and I will get along nicely together. It is true I have not a very fine home now, but I intend soon to have a better one. If you will not mind putting up with a few inconveniences we shall do very well."

"I'm sure it is very kind of you. Nothing could be more inconvenient than where I was. I slept in the attic, and in the winter the snow used to come in on my bed through a crack in the roof. It was not so bad in the summer time."

"Well, there is nothing much at my house, but, as I say, we will soon have a better one. I intend to sell out my business as soon as I can, and start a small machine shop in the village. I think one is needed. Part of the property I inherited is near the river, and I can build a shop run by water power, which will be economical. I will hire several men, and if you wish, you can work for me."

"I should not ask anything better," said Dan. "I did not like farm work, but I did it because there was nothing else to do. I am fond of machinery."

"Perhaps we shall make an engineer of you."

"That would be fine. But I wish I had my books from the farm house. I want to keep on with my studies."

"Never mind. I'll find a way to secure them for you."

Thus Dan found a new home, and a much better one than he had had since his mother died.

CHAPTER XVIII

DAN'S MIDNIGHT VISIT

NEXT door to the blacksmith shop was a small house where Mr. Harrison lived alone. He did his own cooking, and, once or twice a week, he hired a woman from the village to come in and do some cleaning. It was to this rather humble home that the old soldier took Dan.

"The first thing we'll do will be to have dinner," said Mr. Harrison. "I suppose you are hungry."

"Yes, for I had very little breakfast, and I have been kept pretty busy since."

"Well, I'll cook something, and then we can discuss some plans."

The blacksmith proved that he knew how to get a meal, for he had often served as camp cook in the army.

"Can't I wash up the dishes for you?" asked Dan, when they were through eating. "I often did for Mrs. Savage."

"Yes, if you like. Then you can come to the smithy. I have some work I promised to finish for a man, and it is rather a difficult job."

"I'm afraid you were delayed by coming to my trial," said Dan.

"It was a delay I was glad of, since I could be of service to you."

When Dan went into the smithy, after washing and drying the dishes, he found Mr. Harrison hard at work.

"No one would think you had just fallen heir to a large sum," said the boy, for to him ten thousand dollars was a great deal of money.

"I do not intend to let the money make any difference to me, except that I shall do work on a larger scale," remarked the blacksmith. "I intend to keep the shop going until I can sell it, for I have several contracts to complete, and it would not be right to drop them. There is no other blacksmith in the village to whom people can go. Besides, I like to work."

It would seem so, from the way the sturdy old man rained blow after blow on a glowing piece of iron, hammering it into shape, while the red sparks flew all around.

When the iron cooled he thrust it into the forge

fire, and, with bared arms he worked the bellows handle causing the flames and sparks to shoot up the chimney, and lighting the smithy with a yellow glow.

"Can't I help at something?" asked Dan.

"Yes, if you like. There is a box of nails and screws that are all mixed up. I wish you would sort them according to sizes, and put them into small boxes. It is something I have often tried in vain to get time to do."

Dan set to work with a will. Even in the smithy, which naturally was not a very clean place, he liked it better than on the farm.

Dan and the blacksmith continued to live together, the boy helping with odd jobs around the shop, and learning much that was afterward to prove useful to him. The excitement caused by the trial had somewhat died away, and during the next two weeks though the two constables spent part of every day looking for clues to the robbers, they found none.

"The town ought to hire a detective from the city," said Mr. Harrison one evening, when, after the day's work was done, he and Dan were talking the matter over.

"Yes, I wish they would find out who robbed

the place. My trial will come off in the fall, and unless there is some evidence discovered they may find me guilty."

"No jury would ever convict you on such flimsy testimony."

"Perhaps not, but I don't even want to go to trial. I want the real robbers discovered."

"I hope they will be. By the way, did Mr. Savage answer your letter which you wrote him, making a formal demand for your books?"

"Yes. He said he would not give them up."

"Then I shall compel him to by legal means. The books are yours, and you shall have them."

It was several days after this that Dan was thinking over the matter of the books. He did not want his friend, the blacksmith, to have to go to the expense of a lawsuit to recover the volumes.

"I've been bother enough to him," thought Dan. "I believe I can get those books myself. I have a right to them, and I'm going to get them."

He was alone in the smithy, doing a simple job of repairing with which Mr. Harrison had entrusted him. The blacksmith was away from home, having gone to a distant town to see a man in reference to selling him the shop. After finish-

ing the work Dan sat down and did some thinking.

"I believe I'll do it," he said to himself, coming to a sudden decision. "Mr. Harrison will not be at home to-night, and, if there is any trouble over it, he will not be involved. I can stay out as late as I like and he will ask no questions. I'll do it to-night."

What Dan had resolved upon was rather a rash thing, but he did not think so at the time. Boys, when they feel that they are in the right, often go ahead regardless of consequences. It was so in Dan's case.

He had decided to get the books that belonged to him, and this was how he was going to do it. He knew they were in the attic room, and he also knew, from experience, that he could get into the room from the old apple tree, as he had done that day when the constables caught him as he was coming down.

About ten o'clock that night Dan left the little cottage where he and Mr. Harrison lived. He wore an old coat, and had his cap pulled down over his face. Though he was doing what he felt he had a right to, still he did not want any one to see him.

By a roundabout way Dan reached the apple orchard back of Peter Savage's home. The house was all in darkness, as he knew it would be, for the family went to bed early, to save kerosene oil. Still Dan waited until midnight, to be sure every one was sound asleep.

Then the boy cautiously climbed the tree. He went slowly, made no noise, and soon reached the limb which was outside the window of his former room.

Making his way along this he found the window open and stepped inside. Even in the dark he knew where to find his books. He took them from the case and began to tie them up in two bundles with some strong cord he had bought. He intended lowering them from the window with a rope, and then climb down the tree.

Just as he was ready to lower the books, the door of the room suddenly opened and standing there, with a lamp in his hand, was Mr. Savage. Behind him was his wife. They were in their night dresses and Mrs. Savage held a poker.

"So, Dan Hardy, we've caught ye!" she exclaimed. "Not content with robbin' th' doctor's house, ye've turned regular burglar, an' are tryin' t' rob us! Catch him, Peter, he'll not git off so easy this time!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE FALLING CHIMNEY

For a moment Dan did not know what to do. He was too surprised to speak, and, though he had been caught, almost like a burglar, he knew he morally had the right to do what he had done.

"So it was you, makin' th' noise that woke us up, was it, Dan Hardy?" asked Mr. Savage, advancing into the room. "Ye're goin' t' th' bad fast. Now ye'll have t' deliver up whatever ye stole from my house, an' then I'll send fer th' constables."

"I haven't stolen anything from your house, Mr. Savage!"

"Then what did ye come sneakin' in here fer, like a thief in th' night?"

"I came after my books, which you refused to let me have. Now that I have them I am going to leave."

"Ye be, eh? Wa'al, I guess I'll have suthin' t' say about that. Likely story! Come here t' git

a few wuthless books! More like ye come here t' git th' money ye heard I drawed out th' bank!"

"I didn't know you drew any money out of the bank."

"Ye're a thief, Dan Hardy, an' ye know it!" exclaimed Mrs. Savage. "Catch him, Peter. I'll hold him while ye' go over t' Mr. Lane's an' telephone fer th' constables."

"I tell you I only came here for my books, and you have no right to molest me," declared Dan.

"We'll see how much of that th' judge will believe," sneered Mr. Savage. "Ye'd better come along with me, an' make no trouble."

"I'll not come with you."

Dan formed a sudden resolution. With a quick motion he threw his books from the window. Then he turned and made for it himself. It did not take long to get out on the limb, and, a few seconds later he was climbing down to the ground.

"Catch him! Stop him! Hold him!" cried Mrs. Savage. "Why don't ye hold him, Peter?"

"Hold him, Susan? Might as well try t' hold an eel after it's got away from ye. Can't ye see he's gone?"

"Thieves! Robbers!" cried the woman. "Dan Hardy tried to rob th' house!"

Her cries awakened the hired men, but, by the time they had slipped on their trousers and come out, Dan was far away. He had grabbed up his books and run across the fields to the road. Then he walked to Mr. Harrison's house.

"Well, I got my books," said the boy as he undressed and went to bed, "but I suppose there'll be a row over it."

The blacksmith came back early the next day, and Dan told him all about it.

"I am a little sorry you did that," said Mr. Harrison, "yet I don't know as I blame you. Mr. Savage was a mean man to retain the books, and, though you were not proceeding strictly according to law, you were morally in the right. I think whatever violation of law there was, is so slight that it need cause you no worry. Still I will go and see Squire Perkfell, as Mr. Savage will probably try to have a warrant issued for your arrest."

Nor was the old soldier mistaken in his surmise. When he got to the Squire's office he found the angry farmer there.

"Ah, good morning," remarked the Justice pleasantly, when he saw the blacksmith. It was quite a different greeting than the one he had given when Mr. Harrison wanted to represent Dan at

the trial. But then matters were different now. Mr. Harrison was quite wealthy, according to the Hayden standard, and the justice thought perhaps he might be given some legal work to do for the rich blacksmith.

"Good morning," returned Mr. Harrison. "I came in to see you about a certain matter, when you have finished with Mr. Savage."

"Wa'al, my business has got t' be attended to, an' I don't care who knows it," said the farmer. "I want a warrant fer th' arrest of that Hardy boy."

"Then my business is the same as yours," said the blacksmith. "We will discuss it together."

"No, we won't discuss nothin'. I want him arrested, that's all."

"Yes, yes. Of course," said the Squire. "Certainly. I will attend to it. Now what do you charge him with Mr. Savage?"

The truth was Squire Perkfell was between two fires. He wanted to please the blacksmith, because he knew he had money, and he wanted to keep on friendly terms with Mr. Savage, who was also wealthy and a power in the community, and who was to be reckoned with on election day.

"I charge him with bein' a burglar, an' with

comin' inter my house at midnight t' rob an' steal," declared Mr. Savage.

"Perhaps we can simplify matters" interposed Mr. Harrison. "Did he break into your house, Mr. Savage?"

"No, he come in a winder that was left open."

"Then I think I am right, Squire, in saying there can be no charge of breaking entered against Dan."

"No, no. You're right. If he didn't break any doors or windows to get in, he can't be charged with breaking," agreed the Justice. "To arrest a burglar, charged with breaking, entering and stealing, he must be guilty of all three things."

"So, then, Dan broke nothing," resumed the blacksmith. "Did he steal anything, Mr. Savage?"

"He took some books."

"Whose were they?"

"Wa'al, his own, I s'pose, but I was holdin' em."

"Which you had no legal right to do. Then Dan did not steal anything."

"Guess you're right," agreed the Justice. " You can't properly charge him with stealing, Mr. Savage."

"Wa'al, he entered, didn't he?" asked the farmer, satisfied that he could have Dan arrested on this charge.

"He entered, through a window, which was not fastened, and took property that belonged to him, which you unlawfully retained," said Mr. Harrison. " I admit there might have been a technical violation of the law on Dan's part, but there was also a violation on the part of Mr. Savage. If he insists on having a warrant for Dan on the charge of entering, I shall ask for one, on Dan's behalf, for the arrest of Mr. Savage."

"On what charge?" asked the Justice nervously, for he did not want to have to arrest such an influential and rich man as Mr. Savage.

"On the charge of unlawfully converting to his own use the property of another," answered the blacksmith. "Now you can take your choice, Mr. Savage. Either drop this silly charge, or I will make one against you."

"I—I think Mr. Harrison is right," said Squire Perkfell, nervously rubbing his hands together.

"Humph! I'll git even with him, an' Dan too," growled the farmer as he left the office of the Justice. He had decided that discretion was the better part of valor. and he was not sure but that

he had acted unlawfully, as indeed he had, in keeping Dan's books.

"Well, it's all settled," said the blacksmith to Dan, when he came back home. "Now you can rest easy."

"No, not exactly," answered Dan. " I have still to find the rascals who robbed the doctor's house."

"Perhaps we may in time. Don't worry."

But Dan did, though it did no good. The weeks passed, and there was no clue to those who had burglarized the doctor's house. Of course Dan had, with the aid of Mr. Harrison, made a search in the woods, where he had seen the mysterious men, but nothing was found. Either it was well hidden, or the robbers, if such they were, had taken their booty away again.

The summer began to wane. Mr. Harrison had not yet found a purchaser for his smithy, and he continued to work there, as the machine shop he had started to build was not ready for operations. It might seem queer for a man with ten thousand dollars to be working at the forge, like a common blacksmith, but Mr. Harrison liked the exercise, and he knew if he stopped, the people in the neighborhood would have to go a long distance to get any work of that nature done. Besides he

had some special machinery to put in his new shop, and part of it he could build better himself than he could hire done.

So he and Dan continued to live together, working in the smithy from day to day. The boy was acquiring valuable information, and he had plenty of time to study.

One day, Dan and his friend were working on a large iron frame that needed welding. It was so large that Mr. Harrison had to stand inside it, while it rested on the anvil. Dan stood in front to steady it.

It had just been taken from the fire, where one part was heated white hot, for welding, and Mr. Harrison was raining blows on it with a small sledge hammer when Dan, looking up, uttered an exclamation of fear.

The big brick chimney, in which the forge was constructed was cracking, for it was quite old. As Dan watched he saw it start to topple over, right on Mr. Harrison, who could not get out of the way because he was inside the frame, which was like a big cage.

"Look out!" cried Dan. "The chimney is falling!"

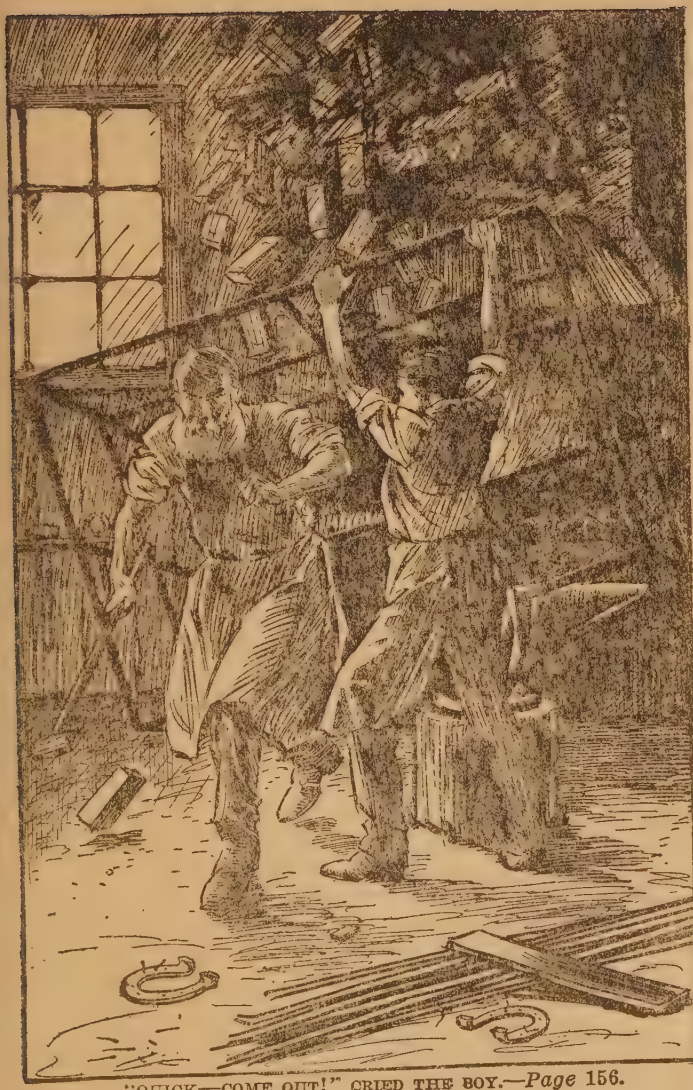
Nearer and nearer to Mr. Harrison, who was

trying in vain to extricate himself from the framework, came the heavy mass of bricks and mortar. He was in danger of being crushed to death.

Then Dan did a risky thing. Dropping his end of the frame he ran around in behind the anvil, and, exerting all his strength, he raised the mass of iron rods, holding the frame up so Mr. Harrison could crawl to one side.

"Quick! Come out!" cried the boy.

The blacksmith saw his opportunity and made a rapid move to safety. Then Dan leaped out of the way, and not an instant too soon, for, a second later the bricks toppled down, burying the anvil and frame out of sight.



"QUICK—COME OUT!" CRIED THE BOY.—*Page* 156.

CHAPTER XX

ANOTHER ROBBERY

When the dust cleared away the blacksmith, who was rather pale, stepped forward and clasped Dan by the hand.

"I owe my life to you," he said, his voice trembling in spite of himself. "I could not have gotten out of the way if you had not helped me."

"Oh, I guess you might have managed somehow," replied Dan, for he did not like to hear himself praised so highly.

"No, I could not. The frame would have held me, and I would now be lying dead under those bricks, Dan."

"I am glad I was here to help you."

"I meant to have the forge chimney repaired some time ago," went on the blacksmith. "I noticed a large crack in it, but I kept putting it off from time to time. This has taught me a lesson, that delay is dangerous."

"It will need quite some repairing now."

"Yes, it will have to be rebuilt. And this decides me. I shall now give up the blacksmith work for ever. I have finished all the contracts I had, except this frame, and that can be done elsewhere."

"What are you going to do then, Mr. Harrison?"

"I shall close up the shop until I find a purchaser for it. Then I will repair the chimney. In the meanwhile I shall proceed with the work of erecting my little machine shop. I have the arrangements all made, and there is no need of delaying further. How would you like to learn to be a machinist?"

"Very much, I think. Would I get a chance to study?"

"That would be part of your work. I should expect you to devote some of your time to your books. My plans are not all made yet, and I may have something to say to you, later, on this point. But the more you can study, the better machinist you will make, and, in time, you may become a mechanical engineer, which, I believe, you told me you would like to be."

"Indeed I would."

"Very well then, now we'll close up this shop. It

seems strange to do so, for I have made my living out of it for a number of years, and I feel attached to it."

"You are not going to move out of the house, are you?"

"Not at present. It is rather small, but, if you do not complain about the cramped quarters, I'm sure I shall not."

"I am only too glad to live there with you," said Dan. "It is very good of you to keep me."

"I am not going to lose sight of you after this," remarked Mr. Harrison with a smile. "I may want you to save my life again," and, though he smiled, there was a serious note in his voice, for his escape had been a narrow one.

"I am going to build a house near my machine shop," the blacksmith went on, "but it will be some time before it is done. Meanwhile we will continue to live in the cottage. Now, Dan, come on, we will lock up the old shop, and I do not expect to enter it again until I bring a purchaser for it."

The door was locked, not without a feeling of regret on the part of the old soldier, for in spite of his hard work, there were many pleasant associations connected with the forge that now lay in ruins.

As the two were closing up the blacksmith shop, Silas Martin, the hired man of Dr. Maxwell's, drove past.

"What's th' matter?" he asked. "Takin' a holiday an' goin' fishin', Mr. Harrison?"

"Well, we're taking a holiday because we have to. The forge has fallen apart."

"Bless my pitchfork!" exclaimed Silas, who was given to odd expressions. "Ye don't say so! Why that forge was built nearly fifty years ago, I've heard my father say."

"Yes, it was quite an old shop when I bought it, and that is twenty years ago. It has seen its best days, like some of us, Silas. I suppose you haven't had any more robbers out your way?"

"No, an' we don't want 'em."

"Have they discovered any more clues?" asked Dan anxiously, for as the weeks went by, without any new evidence being brought out, he began to worry about the results of his trial.

"No more clues," replied Silas. "Doc was talkin' th' other day of hirin' a city detective, ef them constables didn't do suthin' pretty soon. Between you an' me an' the hitchin' post," he went on in a whisper, "I don't believe them constables know beans about catchin' burglars."

"I agree with you," said Mr. Harrison with a laugh.

"G'lang!" exclaimed Silas to his horse. "Got t' hurry back," he added, as he drove off. "Doc's waitin' fer me."

"I wonder if those robbers will ever be caught, so that I will be cleared of suspicion?" spoke Dan, with something of a sigh.

"Don't you worry," advised the old soldier. "It will all come right in time."

Dan and his friend went to the small cottage where they lived. It was a humble home, but neat and clean, for Dan took pride in keeping it in order. Mr. Harrison said it was more like a home to him than it had ever been before, for Dan had learned many housekeeping ways from Mrs. Savage, mean as she had been to him.

Mr. Harrison lost no time in arranging to have his machine shop finished. This necessitated him going away from home quite often during the next few weeks, and Dan was left alone. He did not mind this as it gave him time for studying, which he had to neglect while he was working for Mr. Savage.

One morning as the two were at the partly com-

pleted shop, watching the workmen, Constable Wolff came along.

"Wa'al, I s'pose ye heard th' news?" he said in a questioning tone.

"No. What news?" asked Mr. Harrison.

"Why, Hank Lee's store was robbed last night."

"Mr. Lee's store robbed!" exclaimed Dan.

"Yep," went on the constable, as if he was delighted at it, as, indeed, he was secretly, as it gave him a chance to do something, even if it was not very much. "They bursted open a winder, same as they done at Dr. Maxwell's an' cleaned out th' cash drawer, besides takin' a lot of cigars."

"Have you any clues?" asked the old soldier. "Do you suspect Dan of this crime?" and he smiled a little bitterly.

"No, sir, Dan ain't suspicioned of this. We know he didn't have nothin' t' do with it, 'cause Dr. Maxwell seen th' two men what did th' robbing!"

"He did? Then maybe they are the same persons who robbed his place!" exclaimed Dan. "Tell me about it, Mr. Wolff."

CHAPTER XXI

EXCITEMENT IN TOWN

THE constable liked nothing better than a chance to talk about something he was concerned in. He sat down on a pile of lumber and leisurely related the story of the robbery. As he took quite a long time at it, perhaps it will be better if I condense his story into a few words.

In brief, then, Mr. Lee had come down as usual that morning to open his store. He noticed nothing strange until he reached the cigar case, which he found almost emptied of its contents. That made him suspicious, and he hurried to the money drawer where he had left about fifty dollars. It was all gone. Next an opened window attracted his attention, and he saw that it had been pried up with some instrument, allowing the thieves to enter.

"But I thought you said Dr. Maxwell saw the two thieves," spoke Dan, when the constable had

told that much, and had not mentioned the more important part of the story.

"So I did. I'm comin' t' that ef ye give me time. It was this way. Th' Doc was out on a late call—I think it was t' Mrs. Tillman's daughter, Nancy; she's quite sick. He was comin' back along th' road about one o'clock this mornin', all alone, fer Si Martin run a rusty nail in his hand, an' can't drive."

"Wa'al, th' way Doc tells it, jest as he got near Hank's store he seen a light in it. He thought it was sort of queer fer Hank t' be keepin' open, but he figered that mebby he were balancin' his books. Anyhow th' Doc got a notion he'd like a cigar, an' he saw a chance t' go in an' buy one. So he stopped his hoss in front of th' store an' started up th' steps.

"He must a' scared th' burglars, fer, th' next minute two men jumped out of th' side winder they'd busted open, an' they set off lickity-split down th' road. 'Fore he knowed what were goin' on, Doc he seen 'em jump in a carriage, that was hitched t' a tree, in a dark place, an' they druv off."

"Didn't he give an alarm?" asked Mr. Harrison.

"No, he didn't," replied the constable, "an' that's what he'd oughter done. I live near Hank's store, an' if I'd a heard Doc yell fer help I'd a come on th' run, and we'd had th' burglars now. As it was, Doc thought mebby it might be boys playin' a trick on Hank, and he didn't say nothin'. He got back in his carriage an' druv home."

"Then how did you know he saw the robbers?" asked Dan.

"Soon as Hank discovered he'd been robbed, it become known all over town. Si Martin come in fer some groceries, an' he heard it. Then he told Doc when he got back, an' Doc, puttin' two an' two together, knowed them fellers he seen were th' burglars. He come right over an' told me, an' I'm workin' on th' case now." And then the constable departed.

"I wonder if they can be the same two thieves who got into the doctor's house?" said Dan.

"Perhaps," spoke Mr. Harrison. "At any rate, I think this will be in your favor. A second robbery, much like the first, will show that you are not the only burglar in town, Dan," and the old soldier laughed.

"And I think I can prove a good alibi in this

case," said Dan, joining in the merriment. "I was with you all last night."

As the construction of the machine shop was at a point where it needed much attention from Mr. Harrison, he wasted no more time thinking of the robbery of Hank Lee's store. Nor did Dan, though he vaguely wondered who the burglars might be, and if they were the same ones who had stolen the doctor's silver.

When Mr. Harrison and Dan went home for dinner that noon, they received an unpleasant surprise. They met Truem Mellock near their cottage. Truem was a sort of village gossip, being a lazy, shiftless man, who did odd jobs enough to make a bare living, but who would stick at nothing long.

"I s'pose ye heard all about th' robbery?" he said.

"I think we have, unless they have caught the burglars," replied Mr. Harrison.

"No, they ain't yet, but if Hank had his way, theer'd be an arrest made."

"An arrest? What do you mean?"

"Wa'al, I ain't tellin' no secret when I say he suspects some one."

"Who is it?" inquired Dan, with a sinking feeling at his heart.

"He's splutterin' around, sayin' you could tell suthin' about it, ef ye wanted t'."

"Me?" exclaimed Dan.

"Yep," and Truem nodded vigorously. "He ain't exactly sayin' ye done it, but he thinks ye might be in with th' gang, same as ye was—I mean he says ye was—with th' fellers that got Dr. Maxwell's silver."

"Truem, do you mean to say that Hank is accusing Dan of robbing his store?" asked Mr. Harrison sternly, for Truem was sometimes given to "stretching" things when retailing a bit of village gossip.

"That's what he's practically doin', Mr. Harrison. "I heard him myself."

"Come, Dan," said the old soldier quietly.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to make Hank Lee apologize to you, or else make him prove his charge. This is outrageous! Truem, you come with us."

"I'd—I'd ruther not. Hank might not like—"

"Very well then. I suppose if he told you he told other persons. But I'll stop him from uttering such slanders against an innocent lad. Come along, Dan."

The two started for the heart of the village,

where Hank's store was situated. On the way they were made aware that the robbery had created much excitement, for there was quite a throng in the main street. Everyone seemed to be headed for the store, as it was not often the villagers got a chance to look at a place where burglars had been at work.

CHAPTER XXII

A QUEER FIND

DAN and Mr. Harrison found quite a crowd gathered about Hank's store. Some were inside, where they gazed in open-mouthed wonder at the broken window, and looked at the cigar case, stripped of most of its contents.

Hank was kept so busy answering questions, and telling over again, for perhaps the twentieth time, the story of how he had discovered the robbery, that he could not wait on customers.

"Soon's as I see them cigars gone, I knowed I'd been robbed," said Hank.

"May I have a few words with you?" inquired Mr. Harrison, entering with Dan, and interrupting the storekeeper's recital.

"What about?" asked Hank, in no friendly tone of voice.

"About this robbery."

"Wa'al, I've told all I know. I was jest tellin'

Mrs. Spriggs here about it, and if ye want to listen I s'pose there ain't no law against it."

"That's the trouble, you've been talking too much about this case," said the old soldier sternly. He was a man who went straight to the point.

"Too much? What d' ye mean? Guess I've got a right to say what I please about my own affairs."

"You have, about your own business, but not about that of any one else."

"What d' ye mean?"

It was plain to see that Mr. Lee was uneasy. Those in the store crowded up closer to hear the conversation between him and the former blacksmith.

"I mean you have practically accused Dan Hardy of robbing your store."

"I didn't say he really done it."

"Do you deny you said he ought to be arrested, and that he could tell something about it if he wanted to?"

"Wa'al, s'posin' I did say so?"

"You have no right to say so. It is a scandal, and you are liable to damages for it."

"Not if it's the truth!"

"Then you still maintain that he robbed your store? Be careful of what you say!"

"I don't say he done it. What I did say, an' I say it ag'in, is that a fellow that robbed one place will rob another."

"How do you know he robbed one place?"

"Wasn't he found guilty of robbing the doctor's house?"

"No, and you know he was not. At the very worst there is only a suspicion against him, and a wicked and unjust suspicion it is."

"Wa'al, I don't say Dan robbed my store, but I've got my suspicions that he might know suthin' of the gang that did."

"That's not so!" exclaimed Dan hotly, unable to control himself any longer.

"Easy, Dan," counseled Mr. Harrison in a low voice. Then addressing the storekeeper he went on: "Now I want to warn you, Mr. Lee. I heard the rumors you were circulating about Dan, and if I hear any more I shall take legal means to stop you. I am not the poor blacksmith I was, and I'll spend considerable money to bring you to court, to answer for it, if you spread any more scandal about this boy. I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself to harm one who never injured you!"

"He set a bull after me once," muttered Mr. Lee.

But the mention of the bull, and the memory of what had happened, set the crowd to laughing.

"There is no need of going into that old story now," went on Mr. Harrison. "I have given you fair warning. You can talk about the robbery as much as you please, but any reference to Dan Hardy, as one of the robbers, must not be made."

"No, it ain't right," put in Constable Wolff, coming into the store at that moment.

"Got any new evidence?" asked a man in the crowd.

"Some, yep. I jest come back from talkin' t' Dr. Maxwell. He says both th' burglars was grown men, so that let's Dan out. I knowed he didn't have any hand in this, an' I've got my s'picions that maybe he didn't rob th' doctor's house."

"Thank you," said Dan sincerely.

"Yep, I'm inclined t' think it was th' same gang that done Hank out of his money," the constable went on. "I've got some clues t' work on now."

"I think you ought to beg Dan's pardon for what you have said," went on Mr. Harrison, turning to the storekeeper again. "It is very unjust to him, and you may yet have to answer for it."

The old soldier looked sturdy standing there, with Dan by his side, and the fact that he had plenty of money to go to law with if he chose, rather made Mr. Lee worry.

"Wa'al," he said, "mebby I was a bit hasty sayin' Dan might know suthin' about it. I s'pose he don't."

"Indeed I don't," replied Dan earnestly.

"Wa'al, I'll not mention it any more," and that was about as much as could be expected from a man like Hank Lee. Even this partial apology came hard for him, and Mr. Harrison was satisfied.

"While we're here we might as well take a look at where the burglars got in," said the former blacksmith to Dan, as the storekeeper resumed his telling of the tale for the twentieth time.

They went to the rear of the store, which was pretty well deserted by this time, nearly all of the crowd having gazed as long as they wanted to at the broken window.

Mr. Harrison and Dan went to the casement, the sash of which had been shattered.

"They must have used some powerful instrument," spoke the old soldier.

"Yes, there are the marks of it on the window

sill," added Dan, pointing to some deep indentations.

Mr. Harrison stepped back. As he did so his foot hit against something that gave out a ringing sound, like a piece of iron when it is struck. He looked down, and saw something shiny amid a small pile of waste papers. He picked it up, and, as he did so he uttered a low murmur of astonishment.

"What is it?" asked Dan.

"It is the instrument I once mended for that mysterious stranger who was in town some months ago! The man who was talking to you. I recognize this tool by the way it is welded together. It is my work. I wonder how it came here?"

"What's that ye got?" asked a voice from behind the former blacksmith, and the two turned around to see Constable Wolff looking over their shoulders at the queer find.

"I just picked it up on the floor," replied Mr. Harrison. "What is it?"

"What is it?" repeated the constable in an excited voice. "What is it? Why it's what I've been looking for! It's a burglar's tool—a jimmy they call 'em! It's what they used t' pry open winders with. That's th' best clue yet!"

Mr. Harrison looked at Dan in a significant manner, and, when the constables turned aside for a moment, the old soldier placed his finger across his lips, to warn the lad to say nothing.

"Look a-here!" exclaimed the constable, unable to keep the news of the find to himself. "Here's th' jimmy th' burglars used. They dropped it right under th' winder!"

CHAPTER XXIII

ON THE WATCH

THE announcement of the constable excited the crowd, and the men and boys gathered around to look at the queer tool.

"It looks like a big tack lifter," remarked one man.

"Th' robbers used it fer a winder lifter," added another. "Here, Hank," he called, "come and see how the burglars got in your store."

"Now is a good chance for us to get out, without being asked too many questions," said Mr. Harrison to Dan, in a low voice.

"Why don't you want to answer questions?"

"I will tell you presently; I think I am on the track of a discovery."

"About the burglars?"

"Yes. But come outside."

Few paid any attention to Dan and the old soldier. There was much curiosity to view the

burglar's jimmy, and Constable Wolff was in his element explaining just how the instruments were used, for he had read about them.

"Dan," said Mr. Harrison, when they were out on the street, proceeding toward the new machine shop, "I think we are on the verge of a great discovery. I did not want the people in the store to question me about the jimmy, as they surely would if I had remained. They might have gotten on the track of something."

"Do you think that is the same tool you mended for that well dressed man?"

"I am sure of it. At the time I welded it I did not know what it was. I took his word that he was an inventor, and this was some new kind of instrument. But now—"

"Now you think he was a burglar and robbed Mr. Lee's store?" finished Dan with a smile.

"Yes, and more than that. I think he was the one who robbed the doctor's house. He had some one with him, but I am sure he used a jimmy. Now we shall have to prove that the same person, or persons, who robbed the store robbed the doctor's house."

"How are you going to do it?"

"I think I can apply a few principles of common

sense to this case, and it may result in getting some valuable information."

"I hope it gets the robbers."

"That is another matter; but it may. At any rate we shall know whether or not we are on the right track."

"But I don't see how you can tell whether the same person who broke into Mr. Lee's store, also broke into the house of Dr. Maxwell."

"I'll show you pretty soon. I wish you would go to the old blacksmith shop, and get me the dividers I used to use. You will find them over the work bench."

"I know where they are. I'll get them."

"You might bring both pairs. I think we shall need them."

"I will do so."

Dividers, it may be explained, are simply compasses, such as are used in school to draw circles with. They are made of steel, however, and have no pencil in them, both points being quite sharp. In addition there is an arrangement so that they can be opened to any desired width, and fastened there. They are used by mechanics to take exact measurements.

Dan found the two instruments where the for-

mer blacksmith had told him they were, and brought them away with him.

"Now I think we are ready to proceed with our detective work," observed Mr. Harrison.

"Where are you going to start?"

"At Mr. Lee's store."

Reaching this place, they found that there were now very few persons in the vicinity, nearly everyone having satisfied his curiosity regarding the broken window.

"I am glad there is no one likely to see what we are about to do," remarked the old soldier. "They might ask too many questions, and spoil my plans."

Instead of going inside the store, as Dan expected he would, Mr. Harrison went to a spot just outside the window by which the burglars had entered.

"Now if you will hold one pair of dividers, I will use the other," he said.

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to measure the width and length of the dents made in the window sill by the burglar's jimmy."

In the wooden sill were two deep indentations, where the jimmy had sunk down, as the burglars

pried on it, when the thin edge of the tool was under the edge of the window sash. The two indentations were just alike, so there was no need to measure but one.

Long practice with the dividers had made Mr. Harrison skillful in their use. In a few seconds he had set the sharp points at the extreme edges of one indentation. Then he fastened them there with the set-screw.

"Now, Dan, you hold these, and be careful not to jam them against anything," he said. "Hand me the other pair."

Dan did so. Mr. Harrison then measured the length of the indentation or dent, in the same way.

"Good!" he exclaimed, when he had finished. "No one has seen us. Now, Dan, we must hurry away from here."

"Where are we going now"

"To Dr. Maxwell's house. I think you can guess what for. Can't you?"

"Is it to measure the dents made by the burglars in the window sill there, and compare them with these?"

"Exactly; and if we find they correspond, as I think we shall, we will know that the same man committed both crimes."

"And that man was the mysterious stranger who was talking to me."

"Yes. Or at least one of the gang."

"I wonder if we shall ever catch him?"

"It is hard to say, but it is a good deal easier to catch some particular person, than one of whom you know nothing."

"Yes, that is so. Oh, I do hope we can catch him, and that will prove that I am innocent!"

"We'll do our best, Dan."

It did not take them long to get to Dr. Maxwell's house. The physician was not at home, but from his wife they readily obtained permission to measure the indentations left in the window sill by the burglars' jimmy.

"Do you think you are on the track of the robbers?" asked Mrs. Maxwell.

"We hope so," replied Mr. Harrison, "but I wish you would kindly say nothing about it, as it may spoil my plans."

"I'll not. I hope for Dan's sake that the burglars are discovered. We never for a moment suspected him. His mother was an old friend of mine."

"Thank you very much," said Dan, his heart warming toward the physician's good wife, at her kind words.

It was the work of but a few moments to compare, by means of the dividers, the dents in the doctor's window with those in Hank's store.

"They are exactly the same," announced Mr. Harrison. "I thought we should find them so. That slick stranger is guilty of both robberies."

"The next thing to do is to find him," said Dan, "and I am afraid that will be harder work."

"Yes, it will," admitted the old soldier, "but the battle has only just begun. Up to now we have been skirmishing. Now I am going to unlimber my heavy guns."

"What are you going to do?"

'I am going to hire the best private detective I can get to prove your innocence, and arrest the real robbers!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CLUE

DAN was not prepared for this announcement. Tears came into his eyes as he realized how much Mr. Harrison was willing to do for him.

"It will cost a good deal of money," he said a little doubtfully.

"Well, I am glad I can afford it, Dan. I never had the chance to spend much money, and now that I have more than I need, I am only too glad to aid you with some of it. But we must lose no time. Every hour counts. I think I shall telegraph for the detective. The two constables we have here are worse than useless, when it comes to discovering real criminals."

On getting back to the village Mr. Harrison sent a message to a well known private detective firm in New York. He got an answer that a competent man would arrive the next day.

"If I had stopped to think," said Dan, when

they were talking matters over that night, "I might have suspected that the well dressed man, who asked me so many questions about the village and the people, was the one who robbed the doctor's house. He made particular inquiries regarding him."

"Well, you had enough else to think about then, to excuse you for not getting on the right track. However, better late than never."

"I hope we shall not be too late."

The detective arrived the next afternoon. He was a quiet man, not at all resembling the picture Dan had formed in his mind as to how a detective should look. Indeed, this one resembled a traveling salesman more than anything else.

He came at once to the cottage where Dan and the old soldier lived, and Mr. Harrison was there waiting for him. The robberies were carefully explained to the detective, and then the matter of finding the jimmy, and measuring the marks.

"Do you think I am right in my conclusions?" asked Mr. Harrison, when he had finished.

"I do. I think there is no doubt but that both jobs were done by the same man or men. That he was the person you refer to I also have no doubt. Now the thing is to catch him. I must make in-

quiries, and do it in a quiet way. It will be better for neither of you to seem to know me, so, if you meet me in the village, or this neighborhood, do not pay any attention to me."

The reason for this request was well understood, and, after getting more information, and promising to report as soon as he had anything definite to tell them, the detective took his departure.

"Do you think he will find the man?" asked Dan.

"I hope so. These detectives are highly trained. Still it is no easy matter to locate a criminal when he has had several hours in which to make his escape. We will hope for the best."

Several days passed, during which time Mr. Harrison and Dan were kept busy at the new shop. Work there was progressing rapidly, and the machinery would soon be put in.

"Seems as though we should hear something from that detective," Dan remarked one evening, after supper.

"You are naturally anxious, Dan. I admit I am myself. I should like to hear some news —good news that is—Hark! I think I hear some one coming up the walk."

There was no doubt that some one was ap-

approaching the cottage. A knock was heard at the door, and Dan opened it to admit the detective, who had given his name as Mr. Roscoe.

"Any news?" asked the old soldier eagerly.

"Well, not much," replied Mr. Roscoe, sinking rather wearily in a chair. "I was on the track of your man, but I lost him. I had an accident. The carriage I was riding in broke down, and I got to a certain town, just half an hour after he left."

"Then he is in this vicinity?"

"Yes, he has been since the second robbery. I learned also that he is in company with a rather poorly dressed person. Probably the two work together."

"Have you learned the name of that well dressed, mysterious stranger?" asked Mr. Harrison.

"Yes, he goes by the name of Julius Galt, though I suppose that is only one of many aliases."

"How did you get on his track?" asked Dan.

"By making inquiries. I had a good description of the fellow, and it was easier here to ask persons whom I met than it would have been in a city, for, around here, strangers are not common, and nearly every farmer takes notice of them.

"I traced Galt from town to town. He seems

to be doing nothing, but is well supplied with money. There have been one or two robberies committed recently, and I think he had a hand in them."

"Where is he now?"

"That's what I'd like to know. I had to come back because I ran out of money, and I have to pay cash for the hire of carriages, and for railroad fare. Galt, when I had to turn back, was headed for a town about twenty-five miles from here, called Redcliff. If you can lend me some money until I can telegraph to headquarters for funds, I will get right after him again."

"Certainly," agreed Mr. Harrison, taking some bills from his pocket. "But won't you stay and have some supper?"

"No, I can't spare the time. I must keep right after him. I can eat somewhere along the way. Now I'm off again. Good bye."

"It looks as if he would get him," said Dan, when the detective had closed the door.

"I hope he does. He seems like a good officer."

Three days went by, and no word came from the detective. Dan was begining to lose hope, and it vanished completely when, on the following day a telegram came from the officer, stating that he had

again lost track of the man. The detective added that he would be in Hayden that night, to start on a new clue.

"He's got to begin all over again," said Dan, in a despondent tone. "And my trial comes off in about two weeks. If Galt is not arrested they may convict me."

"Don't worry, Dan. Somehow I feel as if something was going to happen—something good."

"I wish it would hurry up and happen then."

"You must get your mind off your trouble. Suppose you take a ride with me. I have to drive over to Tompkins Corners to see about some machinery. The ride will do you good."

"I should like to go."

"Then get ready, and I'll have the carriage here in a little while."

Since coming into his inheritance Mr. Harrison purchased a horse and carriage, for he found it necessary to go from place to place to transact his new business.

Dan and the old soldier were soon driving along the fine country road, in the direction of Tompkins Corners. They were both thinking of the robbery and the detective, wondering what new clue he would start on.

"Here comes Mr. Savage," announced Dan, as he saw a man approaching driving a horse and wagon.

"So it is. He looks pleased over something."

This was true, for Mr. Savage was smiling broadly, a thing he seldom did.

"Good morning," greeted Mr. Harrison, for though the two men were not very friendly since the trouble over Dan, they were still on speaking terms.

"Mornin'," responded Mr. Savage.

"You look as though something pleased you," went on the former blacksmith."

"Suthin' has. I got back some money a feller cheated me out of."

"How was that?"

"Wa'al, I'll tell ye," spoke Mr. Savage, drawing up his horse, an example followed by Mr. Harrison. "Some time ago a feller gave me a bad quarter—Dan knows about it," and he nodded at the boy. "It was a feller that took a lot of Dan's time talkin' when he'd oughter be shellin' corn, an' I charged him fer it."

"That man?" asked Dan excitedly, nudging Mr. Harrison.

"That's th' feller."

Mr. Savage seemed to have forgotten some of his vindictiveness against Dan, because of getting a good quarter for a bad one.

"Where did you see him" asked Mr. Harrison, trying to speak calmly, for he felt they were now on the track of the robber. "Where was he?"

"I'll tell ye how it was. I was over t' Denville this mornin' doin' a leetle business, an' I stopped off at th' hotel t' see a man. Soon's I went in th' hall I seen this feller in th' barroom."

"Did he know you?" asked Mr. Harrison eagerly.

"Not at fust. I didn't like t' go in a barroom, seein' as how I'm strict temp'rence, but I figured I oughter have my rightful money, so I went in. I went up to t' that feller, an' I says says I, 'Here's ye'r counterfeit money back, an' I want a good piece fer it, or I'll have ye arrested.' My, but he was took back! Then he begun t' laugh, an' pretend it were all a mistake. He said that was a lucky pocket piece of his'n, an' he regretted at losin' it. I said he could have it back an' welcome, an' he took it, an' give me back fifty cents. Said th' other quarter were fer interest. He wanted me t' have a drink, but I took a cigar instid."

"Is he going to stay there?" asked Mr. Harrison.

"It looked so. Said he was thinkin' about openin' a store in town."

Dan and Mr. Harrison both thought that the only way Galt would "open" a store would be with a jimmy.

"So you got your money back," remarked Mr. Harrison, desiring to close the conversation, and make use of the clue so unexpectedly given.

"I did, twice over, an' I'm satisfied. Ye don't want t' come back t' th' farm, do ye, Dan?"

"No, thank you; not as long as Mr. Harrison will keep me."

"I reckon he'll soon git tired of ye. Wa'al, I'll fergive an' overlook th' past, ef ye want t' come back."

"If he does I'll let you know," said the old soldier, as he started up his horse.

CHAPTER XXV

CATCHING THE BURGLARS—CONCLUSION

"That's a great piece of news," commented Dan, when Mr. Savage had driven off down the road.

"Indeed it is. We must act quickly. I wish Mr. Roscoe was here now. But he'll be here to-night, and we can send him right over to Denville to make the arrest."

"Maybe it would be a good thing for us to do it ourselves."

"No, I think not. As soon as Galt saw you he would flee, and might escape. He wouldn't know Mr. Roscoe. Besides I think it likely he is planning a robbery in Denville, and he will stay there until he has done the job."

Mr. Harrison and Dan transacted their business and returned to Hayden. Then they had an anxious wait until evening, when the detective was expected back.

"I never knew such a long afternoon," remarked Dan, about four o'clock.

They were at supper when Mr. Roscoe came in.

"No good news," was the detective's first remark, given in despondent tones. "He's a slippery customer, that Galt."

Mr. Harrison quickly related what the farmer had told him.

"Then we'll start at once for Denville," decided the detective. "Come on. I may need help."

The house was locked up and the three started off.

"Shall we hire a carriage at the livery stable?" asked Mr. Harrison. "Mine is rather small."

"It will be better to take yours, even if we are a little crowded, than to go to a public place, and cause comment. We shall manage. Can your horse travel fast?" asked the detective.

"Fairly so. It is only five miles to Denville."

They were soon on their way through the gathering darkness, for it was now fall, and the sun went down early.

"I only hope he stays at the hotel until we arrive," murmured Mr. Roscoe. "I never was after such a slippery fellow as he is. Every time I thought I had him he was somewhere else."

The last mile seemed the longest of all, and

Dan thought some one must have pulled up the marking stone, and set it down about twice as far ahead as it ought to be. But at last they came in sight of the village of Denville, and a little later they arrived at the hotel.

"You had better let me go ahead," suggested the detective. "I am used to this part of the game. If he saw you he might make a bolt to escape before I could prevent him."

Accordingly, after leaving the horse and carriage under the hotel shed, Dan and Mr. Harrison remained in the shadow on the hotel porch, while Mr. Roscoe went inside. He came out in a few moments.

"Galt is in the bar-room, playing cards," he announced. "I am going in and arrest him. You had better stay at the front door, Mr. Harrison, and make a grab if he comes out that way. Dan, you go around back, and get one of the stablemen to help you, if he makes a bolt out that way. I will wait three minutes for you to get there, and place yourself."

Dan hurried around to the rear, and enlisted the services of a stout Irish groom, briefly explaining what was about to take place.

Mr. Roscoe entered the barroom. At a table

was Galt, dealing cards to a number of men. Among them was a rather poorly dressed individual, somewhat the worse for liquor.

No one paid any attention to the detective. Mr. Roscoe walked quietly up to the table and, looking at Galt said:

"I want you to come with me."

"Well, I like your impudence!" exclaimed the man. "Who are you? And why should I go with you?"

"I would have explained privately if you had taken my hint," said the officer suggestively. "I am a detective, and I place you under arrest for the robbery of the house of Dr. Maxwell, and the store of Hank Lee."

Galt jumped to his feet. Before he could make a move the detective had snapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists.

"Now, I want you also," he added, turning to the shabbily dressed man.

"Wan' me? Wha' fer?" was the stupid inquiry.

"As the accomplice in these robberies," and the partly intoxicated man was also handcuffed.

As might be expected the arrest created intense excitement. Men crowded around the detective and

his prisoners, but Mr. Harrison who had been watching through the glass door, entered quickly and took charge of the semi-intoxicated person, while Mr. Roscoe managed Galt.

Then Dan, who heard the commotion, and saw that no escape was being attempted, went in. At Mr. Roscoe's suggestion the boy telephoned to the police of Denville, a couple of officers arrived, and the two prisoners were soon in the town lock-up.

"We will take them to Hayden in the morning," said the detective. "Well, I'm glad this job is over."

"So am I!" exclaimed Dan joyfully. "My innocence can now be proved."

Amid great excitement the prisoners were brought to Hayden early the following day. The news spread like wildfire that the men who robbed Hank Lee's store had been captured. A big crowd gathered at the jail.

"So they've got th' rascals, eh?" asked Hank, when some one told him. "I'll go have a look at 'em. Did they say Dan Hardy was one of their gang?"

"I don't know," replied the man who brought the news.

Hank lost no time in going to the jail. The prisoners were just being taken to cells. Hank gave one look at the poorly dressed man, and exclaimed:

"Simon!"

"Oh, is that you?" asked the man. "Hello, Hank! You ain't goin' t' prosecute your own brother, fer takin' a few cigars, are you?"

"Brother? Are you his brother?" asked Mr. Harrison of the prisoner.

"That's what I am. I'm his own brother, Simon Lee."

"My good-for-nothing brother you mean!" exclaimed Hank. "I disown you! You've disgraced me! To think of your being a robber," and he was much chagrined.

"Oh, I didn't do it all. Galt did the most of it. I only helped."

"Poor weak fool," murmured Galt, who seemed cool enough under the circumstances.

We need not further concern ourselves with the burglars except to say that they both confessed to robbing the doctor's house, and Mr. Lee's store.

There were three in the gang, but the third member was never caught. It was also learned that the men Dan had seen that night were the

burglars, and they were hiding the doctor's silverware, which they afterward removed.

Simon Lee, it appeared, was a man with a weak nature. He had fallen into criminal ways, been associated with Galt, and then had tried to reform. For a time Galt had lost track of him, and then, learning he had a brother who kept a store in Hayden, he had hunted out the small village, and, on a threat of disclosing a certain crime in which Simon was concerned, had compelled the fellow to join him in other illegal acts. They had planned a robbery in Denville but were arrested before they could accomplish it.

Part of Dr. Maxwell's silver was recovered, but Hank Lee never got any of his money back. Both burglars were sentenced to long terms in prison and there was never any occasion for putting Dan on trial.

"Well, that turned out well, but I am sorry for those men—sorry for their evil ways," said the old soldier to Dan, one day, toward the beginning of winter, when they were in their new cottage, near the completed machine shop.

"Yes, I feel as if a load had been lifted from my shoulders," replied the boy.

"I never had any doubt about the outcome, but

I am glad you were so completely and quickly vindicated. It was quite a shock to Hank Lee, to find his own brother had robbed him. But, Dan, I want to talk about something pleasanter now. I have a proposition to make to you. I have been observing you for some time, and I have made up my mind, if you will consent to it, that I will adopt you as my son."

"Your son?"

"Yes. I am all alone in the world, and so are you. Why should we not always be together?"

"It is too good of you!"

"Nonsense. It will give me something more to live for. Then you agree?"

"Oh yes, and thank you so much!" and Dan's face showed his pleasure.

"Then I will have the papers drawn up at once. Now another matter,—I have decided to send you to school, and, if you like, to college. There is nothing in this world like education, and the best use I can put some of my money to is to enable you to rise in life."

"Oh, Mr. Harrison. I never expected this!"

"Nor did I expect my legacy. It is good luck for both of us."

And so it proved. Dan acquitted himself well

at school, and if you should go to Hayden now you would find it quite a thriving town, with a large machine shop, of which Dan Hardy, no longer a farm boy, is the head, having succeeded to all Mr. Harrison's interests when that good soldier became too old to take an active part. And here we will leave Dan Hardy and his friends, for he has many.

THE END

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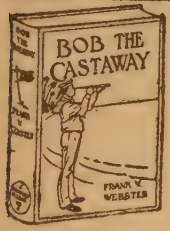

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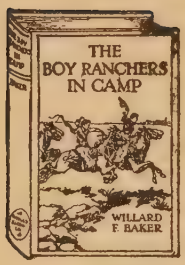

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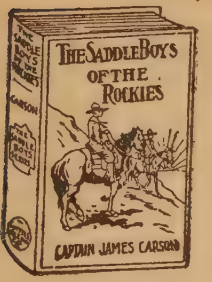

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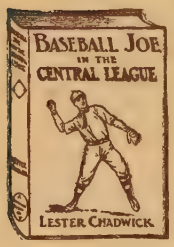

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